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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" MRS. ELTON ASKED. "WHAT IS THE MATTER?"

UNDER A CLOUD.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Hm Grace the Duchess of Oldenthorne is a lady, and I am not. Is that what you wish to infer?"

"I didn't mean it quite in that way, miss, but you do take one up so short."

"I think you did mean it in that way. It was exactly what you said, without much beating about the bush. I am not accustomed to argue with my servants. If you want a lady to live with, go and seek one; be good enough to leave the room and my apartments at once. Here are your wages and a month in lieu of notice, though you have no right to expect it. I shall expect you to be gone in an hour."

"Eay-day, queens! What is all this about?"

And a tall, stately-looking gentleman, with white hair, entered the room from the terrace of the hotel, and confronted the indignant mistress and the impertinent maid.

"Nisbett has been airing her opinions papa, that is all," the girl said, in a voice that trembled ever so little, in spite of herself. "She has been telling me I am no lady, and—"

"And what?" the father asked, with a look at the woman—who was very pale, but stood her ground—that would have half withered anyone but the most impudent of her sex.

"And that she has been accustomed to the service of more exalted persons than you and I; the Duchess of Oldenthorne, for example."

The gentleman's eyes flashed now, and he turned fiercely to the lady's maid.

"How dare you mention that woman's name in the presence of my child?" he asked; "leave the house at once."

"I'll go as soon as I can get ready," was the surly answer. "I shall expect my wages paid, and my fare to England as well."

"Send me word when you are ready, and you shall have what you want; I never submit to a second impertinence from a servant."

He motioned to the door, and she went. And the young Englishman in the next room, who had heard every word that had passed through his open window, wondered to himself what manner of girl it might be who had so summarily dismissed her domestic, and had upheld her dignity so completely, as the voice told that she had.

It was a musical voice, sweet and low, in spite of the ringing indignation in its tones; and he longed with the curious inclination that comes upon all of us sometimes to do unnecessary things, to get a glimpse of her face.

It was no use. He strolled to the further corner of the terrace and strove to peep into the shaded room. But the young lady was in the very farthest corner, and all he could see of her was her foot, in a neat-fitting satin slipper, resting on a foot-stool.

He could see the gentleman—her father; pre-

sumably—to whom she was speaking. He was a noble-looking man with a benevolent—though rather worried-looking face, faultlessly dressed, and with the unmistakable patrician air that some people, no matter what their condition, carry from their cradles to their graves.

"Thorough!" Philip Elton said to himself as he looked at him; "good-breeding in every inch of him. Who is he, I wonder!"

He had recourse to the visitors' book, and soon found the names of the occupants of the suite of rooms next to his; the entries were simple enough.

"Maurice Ridgeway, London."

"Maude Ridgeway."

"The banker, surely!" he said to himself, "the richest man in London, they say; and that sweet-voiced girl is his daughter. I must make their acquaintance."

The Hotel Victoria at Bingen was very full, for it was the height of the season. But Philip Elton had been there many times before and was a favourite with the ruling powers who minister to the wants of travellers and tourists which are by no means the same things. For him they had put a bed in a tiny room which really belonged to the suite occupied by Mr. Ridgeway and his daughter. Hence his unknown proximity to them, and his chance listening to the young lady's dismissal of her maid.

Going back to his own apartment he came upon the woman once more; this time in conversation with her master, and again he overheard what was certainly not intended for his ears.

"You have some motive in this that you have not stated," Mr. Ridgeway said sternly.

"Perhaps I have," the girl replied; "I am leaving because I think it best to do so for reasons of my own."

"May I ask what they are?"

"I shall keep them to myself."

"Very well. But you will bear in mind that my daughter dismisses you; that is a very different matter to leaving your situation on your own account."

"I wished her to do so. I can get plenty of references without troubling Miss Ridgeway for them."

"You are an ungrateful woman, my daughter has always treated you kindly."

"I make no complaint; I am going, that is all, and I dare say you can guess why, Mr. Ridgeway; I am only doing what the rats do, I fancy."

She disappeared as she spoke, and Philip Elton just going in at his own door saw the banker lean up against the wall of the corridor like a man who has received a blow; with a face of livid whiteness.

"What the rats do!" he heard him mutter.

"What does she mean! Who can have whispered anything? Bah! There is nothing for anyone to whisper. The woman is a vindictive mad woman, that is all. Are you there, Maude, darling!" and with a smile on his lips, that any but a casual observer could have seen was forced and unnatural, he entered his daughter's sitting-room.

"I wonder if I could tumble in at their window and then apologise for it," Arthur Elton said to himself, after another vain attempt to see the invisible Maude Ridgeway. "Am I bewitched, I wonder, that I am going crazy for a sight of a girl I have never heard of till to-day? She may be a Gorgon for aught I know. What the rats do! What did that woman mean? There is nothing of the falling house about the Ridgeways. And yet his face was like a corpse when I caught a glimpse of it afterwards. Come in."

Some one was knocking at the door, and a waiter appeared in answer to his words.

"What is it, Karl?"

"A telegram, mein herr," the man replied, laying an ominous looking missive on the table before Arthur Elton. I say ominous looking, because the young man knew full well that nothing but disaster of some sort would bring him such a document.

"The answer is waited for," the waiter said.

Hastily and with a curious sinking at his heart Arthur Elton tore open the envelope only to

find his worst fears realised. His mother had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill, and was lying, it was feared, at the point of death.

In an hour he had packed up his belongings and ended his holiday, and was speeding as fast as rail and steam could carry him to England. The only son of his mother—and she was a widow—the old Bible description applied to him. He and his mother were alone in the world, and loved each other with a love that is rare between mother and son. They were connected by ties of grief as well as blood. By the side of his father's dead body, done to death by his own hand, Arthur Elton, little more than a boy then, had vowed to be the support and protector of his grief-stricken mother, and he had kept his word.

The tragedy of that miserable time was ten years back now, and he had grown to manhood and fulfilled the promise of his school-boy days. He was managing clerk to a large firm of merchants, and was growing in their estimation day by day. He had a good salary, and he and his mother lived in a quiet village within easy distance of London.

They kept a modest household, and Mrs. Elton was much respected and beloved in the neighbourhood. She had moved to Enderleigh as soon as she recovered from the illness brought on by the shock of ruin and grief that had been her portion. It had all come upon her at once.

She had bidden her husband good-bye when he went to business in the morning, knowing nothing, fearing nothing of the catastrophe that was coming upon her, and she had been telegraphed for only three hours later to go and stand by his dead body, and wonder if the whole universe were crashing into ruin around her.

Elton and Co. had "gone" in one of those sudden panics that come upon the financial world sometimes like an earthquake. For months the head of the firm had seen the impending catastrophe, but he had hoped on and tolled on, thinking to avert the ruin that was imminent. It was all in vain; every struggle only sank him deeper and deeper into the mire of debt and difficulty, and when he could struggle no more he took the shortest and saddest way of solving the apparently hopeless problem.

His wife would be taken care of, he argued to himself; she had her own little property secured to her, and though it was only a drop in the ocean of his vast riches, it would stand between her and starvation. His disgrace would not reflect on her, and she would learn to think of him as kindly as he deserved, so he took the "leap into the dark" and left the two behind him in the light, to mourn for him with loving fidelity, and to forgive the madness that had prompted the rash act, and left them friendless and alone.

The creditors, and their name was legion, behaved very kindly to the desolate widow and the terrified orphan; they gave up many little things that were prized as household gods, and left odds-and-ends of furniture to fit out the humble home to which they retired. Arthur was taken from the expensive school where he was finishing his education, and a situation was found for him, which he filled so satisfactorily that he had never left the firm, but had risen step by step till he had attained his present position.

The old days of luxury and splendour seemed like a dream now, and the little cottage at Enderleigh appeared always to have been the boundary of his life, and his heart sank very low as the train neared the tiny station, and he looked eagerly out as if the very trees and hedgerows could give him tidings how it was with the mother he loved so dearly.

"Enderleigh! Enderleigh!" It seemed as if there was an ominous warning in the very voice of the porter as he shouted out the name; but the station-master, who knew him well, met him with a cheerful face, and a smile of glad recognition.

"Glad to see you, sir," he said; "you do look tired, to be sure."

"I have come straight from Bingen without stopping or scarcely eating," the young man replied. "How—how is she?"

He hardly dared ask; he dreaded to hear that there was no hope, or that he had come too late, but the voice that replied was cheery and hearty, and the words were hopeful.

"Mending, Mr. Elton—mending well, they say. They did not think that you could possibly be here till to-morrow, or someone would have been up to meet you."

"Thank Heaven!" Arthur Elton said, earnestly. "I have feared I scarcely know what I should not have been here but that I caught a special train at Cologne, and the boat at Rotterdam. I am tired, I have not felt it till now."

He recoiled as he went down the station steps, and began to understand what a strain there had been on his feelings for the last four-and-twenty hours. He had feared the worst, and had come home to find that his fears were groundless. His mother was alive and safe once more, and his eyes filled with tears as he opened the little gate and went up to the door. He had been seen; his mother's faithful servant, who kept house for her and him, was at the window, and rushed down; taking him in her arms as she had done all her life, and hugging him as if he were still the little boy she used to nurse.

"Thank Heaven, you are come, dear," she said, sobbing, for she was weary with watching, and the danger was only just over. "She will live now. But oh! I thought yesterday that you would never see her again alive."

CHAPTER II.

"No, I am not joking, mamma dear; I am in serious, sober earnest. I can't marry Miss Graham, because I love another woman."

And Arthur Elton looked up into his mother's pale face with a light laugh, that went far to reassure her. His love, whatever it was, and whoever the object of it, could not be such a very serious affair if he could laugh over it, and give her back such sunny, merry looks when he spoke of it.

"But, dear, I have never heard a word of this before."

"You would not now, my dear old match-making mother, if you had not proposed the horror of a match with Miss Eveline Graham."

Mrs. Elton was well again now. Dullness, as she always was—but not ill—she was able to enjoy her life in the quiet fashion that was her custom. She had turned away from the threshold of the silent land to the things of earth once more, and her son felt that he had never known how dearly he had loved her till now. Like all mothers, she was continually planning and mapping out his life for him, forgetting that he was a man, with a man's aims, and a man's thoughts and feelings, and her great aim just now was to find a proper wife for him.

He laughed, and told her that he could find one for himself; but she had restless desire—born doubtless of her narrow escape from death—to see him comfortably settled in a home, where a gentle, loving wife would be the ruling spirit, and where he would be studied as she had studied him all his life since they were left alone together.

"I can't live for ever," she said, stroking his hair as she used when he took his boyish troubles to her knee, and was coaxed out of wilful moods and fractious tempers. "And Nancy is ten years older than I am. You will want someone to look after you when we are gone."

"My dear mamma, you talk as if you were old enough to be the wife of Methuselah in his old age," her son said, laughing. "You and Nancy are both going to live to an unexampled old age, and nurse me when I am a gouty old man. When I want a wife I will find one, never fear."

But Mrs. Elton would not let the subject alone, and by-and-by announced that she had found just the very girl for Arthur in the person of the orphan niece of the clergyman of the parish—a well-educated, lady-like young person, conversant only friendless and universally liked and admired for her good qualities and pretty face. She managed to bring the young people together and



had Eve Graham, as she was generally called, a great deal at Clematis Cottage—as she had named her pretty little nook of a house—and she had been glad to see that Arthur had seemed to like the pretty, unassuming girl; and she and her fellow-conspirator, Nancy, formed all sorts of plans about what they should do when the great event came off. But Arthur would have none of Miss Graham; he declared that the amiability was all on the surface, and that the young lady was a very human angel after all.

He had seen her slap and pinch her little cousins to whom she acted as governess, when she thought she was conveniently far from all observation, and better to death a young bird that had fallen out of the nest into the path where she was walking. The first action he could have excused, for he knew what horrible tyrants children can be, and how nearly mad they can drive a sensitive nature; but for the latter piece of cruelty there was no excuse.

The pretty face looked positively transformed as she pecked at the poor little creature with her parrot till she had killed it. And he went home resolving that nothing on earth should ever make him ask Miss Graham to be his wife; he did not tell his mother, he only parried her remarks on her schemes, and trusted to time. Miss Graham was nothing loth; he could see it in every look, and hear it in every word; she laid herself out to please him, and would have liked well enough to be the wife of the rising young clerk.

Mrs. Elton's illness put a stop for a time to her visits to the cottage, and the worthy lady's schemes for her taking her place there some day as its mistress. And now Arthur was speaking his mind, and telling his mother plainly that he would have none of her.

"Nothing that you could urge would ever make me think of marrying her," he said, and Mrs. Elton stared at him in astonishment; she thought Eve Graham such an amiable, nice girl.

"Why, dear? She is a lady and well educated."

"If she were a princess, and the most gifted woman on the face of the earth, I should never covet her for my wife," Arthur said, quietly, and again Mrs. Elton asked why?

"Because she has no heart, mother. She is cruel, and unwomanly; besides, I love someone else."

"Who else, dear?"

"I don't know, I have never seen the lady."

"My dear boy, you are joking."

"No I am not, I am in sober earnest. I have never seen the lady; I am in love with her voice. She is as far above me as the stars, but I love her. It seems to me that the world holds no other woman; I am sure it does not hold any other for me."

"My dear Arthur, you must be ill."

"I suppose I am," the young man replied. "It is sickness, is it not, the thing that men call love? This is my first acquaintance with it, mother. I have lived till now, fancying that no woman would ever touch my heart, that I should marry some day, from expediency maybe, and settle down into a sort of Darby and Joan existence with—well, with Eve Graham for aught I know. I was beginning to think that all women were alike till I met—no, not met, for I have never seen more of her than the toe of her shoe—the one woman who will fill my heart till it beats no longer for this world. I have fallen in love with sweet tones and gentle accents; they haunt me day and night, and—"

"And when you have found the lady, and been introduced to her, your fancies will all vanish," Mrs. Elton said. "We must find her and make her acquaintance, then you will come to your senses, and marry someone else. I will not say a word about Eve Graham if you really do not like her."

"I really don't. I have seen her torture a live thing to death, deliberately, and with a purpose, and the remembrance of it would come between us for ever. I am rather like Cowper, poor, demented nerve-ridden creature though he was."

"I hope not, dear. How are you like him?"

"In my sentiments, mother. I will not

have for my wife a woman who can watch a bird die under the stabs of her parrot's point, and smile the while."

"No," Mrs. Elton said, with a shiver. "I should not like such a daughter; but are you sure, Arthur?"

"Quite, I watched her from beginning to end; she need never know it."

She never did. She wondered a little what caused the cessation of the invitations to Clematis Cottage, and she married in course of time, and had children who went in fear of her, and a husband who spent little of his time at home, and was wont to say in the seclusion of his club and amongst his most intimate friends, that your sweet, low-voiced women were fierser when they were roused, and that a man had better marry the most blustering virago that ever wore petticoats than submit himself to the tender mercies of a golden-haired beseeching angel with loving eyes and caressing hands. He knew doubtless from experience what Arthur Elton had discovered by accident.

Mrs. Elton heard no more for some time about the voice that her son had fallen in love with. He had spoken half in jest, but a good deal in earnest. Ever since the day when he had accidentally overheard the conversation in the next room to his own at Bingen, the sweet voice of Maude Ridgeway had haunted him; sleeping and waking—all through his hurried journey home on receipt of the telegram he seemed to hear it. He had dreamed of it, and listened for it everywhere.

He had never chanced to come across the young lady again. It was not to be expected that he would; their ways—his lay very far apart indeed, and Miss Ridgeway would be sure to marry a millionaire. With her father's enormous wealth she could choose whom she would.

It is not always that beauty and riches go together in this world, but the banker's daughter was an exception—she was radiantly lovely and accomplished as well. Oddly enough, her father proposed a suitor to her in whom she could not feel the slightest interest—no other than his own manager, who was understood in commercial circles to be a very warm man indeed, but who certainly did not seem a brilliant match for lovely Maude Ridgeway.

He was to be taken into partnership on the conclusion of certain financial arrangements which the banker was engaged in bringing about; but even as her father's partner Maude thought that Mr. Dempster would be detestable.

She was not excessively vain, considering circumstances. She had been well brought up, but she did think, as any girl in her position would, that to give herself to James Dempster, a man who had risen from nothing, would be throwing herself away.

"I never heard of such a dreadful thing, papa," she said to her father, when he came to her boudoir one day after dinner, and, sitting on the couch beside her, took her hand in his, and told her that Mr. Dempster had asked his permission to pay his addresses to her. "Whatever did you say to him? Was he drunk?"

"My dear Maude, gentlemen do not drink."

"Gentlemen do not," Maude said, pointedly.

"The word hardly applies to him."

"I think it does, dear. I would not give my daughter to anyone but a gentleman."

"And you would give me to him. Oh, papa!"

"Nay, my dear; it has not gone so far as that. I have made him no promises; I have only said I would speak to my child, and—"

"And the answer is no—a thousand times no!" Maude said passionately. "Papa you must have lost your senses! Marry that man—I would rather die!"

"Is there anyone else, dear, that you talk like that?" the banker asked, his face very white and his lips quivering.

Maude did not know what maddening reasons he had for asking her to marry his manager. He loathed himself when he thought what the little hand that lay so lovingly in his own was to pay for. But his daughter did not notice his agitation; she only heard his words.

"Anyone else," she said, with a laugh; "armies

of them, papa; their name is legion! Papa, I might be Duchess of Deerbroke if I chose; I have only to say the word!"

"You don't mean that the Duke has proposed?"

"He would if I looked at him. I can see it in his stupid, tipsy face. Don't be afraid; I am not going to marry a drunken boor, with his spoons and forks in the hands of the halliffs, not even to have the privilege of keeping up his establishment, with your money."

She laughed merrily, and he was glad to hear it, for it showed that her heart was still free.

"Don't look so solemn, papa," she said. "Tell Mr. Dempster that he is 'declined with thanks,' like the manuscripts sent to the publishers. I am duly sensible of the honour he has done me, but I can't marry him."

"Maude, you must listen to him."

"Must, papa?"

"If you love me—if you love your home and the pleasant life here. I would not part with you, my darling; I should gain a son instead. Listen, Maude; I have something to say to you, my dear. You will not say me nay when I have done. I would not urge you if your heart was not your own to give! If it had gone into any good man's keeping I would say never a word. Don't look at me, child. Lay your head on my shoulder, and listen."

Maude Ridgeway went up to her room half an hour later with a white face and wild eyes, and sat down before the mirror and stared at herself in the glass, and wondered whether it were indeed herself or someone else that had promised to marry the bank manager.

"If I could die," she said, "if I could only die; but that would not help papa."

And then she thought of her maid's defection at Bingen, and began to understand it; and of a face she had seen more than once (herself unseen) as she sat in the pretty room overlooking the river.

"If it had only been him!" she said to herself, and burst into passionate weeping, which helped to relieve her of the load of terror and agony, and leave her free to think, and face the misery that was overwhelming her.

CHAPTER III.

MAUDE RIDGWAY was no heroine, as the novel reading world counts heroines. She had never done any great thing, nor endured any terrible calamity.

Her young life had been peaceful and prosperous; the only sorrow that had ever entered into it had been the death of her mother when she was all too young to understand what she herself had lost, or to comprehend the passionate grief of her father for the wife he had loved so dearly.

She had been well cared for by loving hands and hearts ever since, and had never known what the loss of a mother really meant.

Her father idolized her; but he had too much good sense to allow her to be entirely spoiled. She had been thoroughly educated and carefully trained, mentally and physically.

Married Ridgeway might well be proud of his child, for Maude's beauty and grace were almost unequalled, and were already making her famous in the butterfly world of fashionable London, where his great wealth made him and his child welcome to the highest houses in the land.

People said there was nothing that Miss Ridgeway did not do, and do well. A thorough musician and accomplished artist—a charming girl—no wonder her life was all pleasure, and that the conversation she had just had with her father came upon her like a thunderclap.

As she sat before the glass in her dressing-room, after dismissing her maid for the night—a bright young girl of about her own age, who formed a pleasant contrast to the aristocratically-inclined Nisbet—she almost wondered whether that tear-stained face and swollen eyes were indeed hers, or whether she were not under the influence of some dreadful nightmare.

"It is true," she muttered to herself, "it was

papa who said it, and I am to marry that man! I would rather die! If it were only myself I would rather go and lie down in the river, and let it carry me away to the sea, with the world and all in it at an end for me; but it is for him—I must not forget that—for papa, and if I do not do it—if I do not stand at the altar, and promise to love, honour, and obey—ah, what shall I do! what shall I say! I cannot—I cannot!”

She flung herself on her couch, and burst into passionate weeping, sobbing hysterically, and fighting out her emotion as well as she could.

Her sorrow was all her own. She could have no sweet sympathy to make it more endurable. Her father's honour—his life almost—was in her keeping, and she must not betray by word or look that the compact she had entered into was distasteful to her.

She wished she could die—that someone would give her a sleeping draught, like Juliet, and save her from the hated marriage.

She would not mind anything that might come after; the tomb would have no terrors for her in comparison with the horrid embraces of Mr. Dempster.

He had looked at her sometimes when he took her hand—and he was very fond of taking her hand—in a way that made her feel as if she should like to slap his face; and she would have to endure it now.

He would be able to stare at her as much as he liked, and call her by her name in that odious voice of his, and—Bah! It would not bear thinking about!

She would run away. Papa would forgive her, even if she ruined him. Ruined! Ah, that was the word! That was what he said when he implored her, on his knees almost, to marry the man who was asking for her.

It was a very white and tear-stained face that presented itself at the breakfast-table the next morning.

Maude's night had been sleepless for the first time in her life, and she had wept away all the peach-like bloom of her cheeks. Her father was not there—only a note from him lying by her plate.

She took it up in dismay. She had never known him absent himself from her breakfast-table before when he was at home.

"Where is papa?" she asked of the servant, who came in with the tea and coffee.

"Master went out about half-an-hour ago, miss," the man replied. "A telegram came for him, and he started at once. He left a note for you."

"And I am a good hour later than usual," Maude said, with self-reproach.

The world seemed to be turning upside down with her since last night.

"A cup of tea, Tomkins, please. No, nothing to eat. I don't want any breakfast."

Tomkins would fain have tried to persuade her to try something; but he saw in her face that she was not to be talked to.

He was an old servant, who had been in the family many years, and he ventured to ask if there was anything wrong.

"No, nothing," Maude replied, looking up from her father's note with a smile. "Papa is out on business, that is all. I think I will have a bit of toast after all. I was frightened at seeing only a letter instead of him; but he was only called away unexpectedly."

Tomkins could have told of his master's white face as he walked rapidly away from the house, and of the groan that burst from him when he read the message that summoned him wherever he was gone.

But the note was reassuring to Maude, who had no suspicion what her father's absence meant.

"Don't wait for me, darling," Mr. Ridgeway wrote, "I may be away all day; I will get back as soon as possible. My girl will have to be brave and patient with her poor old father; but she shall hear no more of what troubled her so last night; there will be no occasion for the sacrifice."

"Oh! what a darling papa!" Maude said to herself, her colour coming back, and her eyes brightening. "He has managed to make that odious man give up the notion of marry-

ing me. I should have done something desperate. What has papa said to him I wonder!"

She had to pass the day by herself; Mr. Ridgeway was detained in the city; and Maude drove out and called upon several friends, and wondered little at the curious looks that seemed to follow her as she went about.

It was her new costume and bonnet doubtless—there had been nothing like them seen in London yet—she had had them straight from Worth's, and they were an inspiration of his just suited to her fresh young beauty.

She had a rather queer and disagreeable adventure as she was coming out of the park in her dainty carriage, which everybody pronounced the most perfect thing of its kind in town.

She had dropped the lady who acted as her chaperon at the house of her friend, where she was going to spend the evening, and had taken up a young lady, whom she was going to take home with her.

There was a little block at the gate, the carriages were stopped to let the Princess go by, and the father of the girl who was with her had come up, and somewhat stiffly told her that he wanted her; Miss Ridgeway must kindly excuse her.

"Oh! don't take Nelly away!" Maude pleaded. "We are going to have such a cosy evening together."

"I am afraid I must," was the grave response. "I think you will find that your papa wants you, my dear."

"Wants me! Is anything the matter, Mr. Gordon?" Maude asked, in sudden terror. "Is he ill?"

"He was quite well when I saw him an hour since," Mr. Gordon replied. "Come, Nellie, I am waiting for you," and, raising his hat to Miss Ridgeway, he gave his daughter his arm and escorted her to her mother's carriage.

Maude Ridgeway, a little nettled at his summary interference with her enjoyment, and somewhat frightened at his curious manner as well, was watching them across the road, when a man with a wild, white face seized one of the horses by the head with a threatening look and gesture.

A policeman caught his arm, and baid him, demanding what he meant by frightening the young lady and making a disturbance.

"She is his daughter!" Maude heard him say; "they said so just now. Why should she be sitting here in her braveries, and my children at home ruined and beggared by—"

They were forcing him away, and Maude heard no more, for the block was over, and her equipage was moving with the rest.

But she caught a sentence as she passed out at the gate that set her thinking.

A gentleman and lady standing together on the pavement remarked her, and the lady said, audibly,—

"How can she! What bad taste to be showing herself here."

"Perhaps she does not know," was the answer. "She looks as if she did not."

Know what! Maude's heart sank very low, and she hastily bade the coachman drive home at once.

"Go fast, Hartley," she said, hurriedly, "as fast as you can; I want to get home."

Some people were lingering on the pavement in front of Mr. Ridgeway's house as his daughter drove up, and Maude thought that they looked at her menacingly and muttered to themselves as the doors opened to admit her, and a glimpse of the handsome hall and wide staircase was obtained from the street.

"Where is papa?" she asked the first servant that she met.

"Master is not in, miss," was the reply.

But to Maude's astonishment he came to her room before she had been there many minutes.

"Yes, dear, I was in," he said; "they did not know downstairs; I let myself in."

"Papa, what is wrong?" she asked, seeing the grey look in his face, and noting the hands that shook in spite of their being clasped to hide their tremor.

"Everything!" he said, hoarsely. "I told you in my note that there would be no more

about Dempster. You will never see him again, dear; he will not come between us any more."

"Is he dead, papa?" Maude asked, in amazement—her father's manner was so curious, so changed from what she had ever known it to be.

"No, dear, he is not dead; but we need not talk about him. I want a service at your hands, Maude; perhaps it may be the last I shall ever ask of you."

"Papa!"

"Well, I did not mean that quite; I meant I should never ask the same sort of thing again. Take off your bonnet, my darling, and sit down here by me. Tell that girl you don't want her," as Maude's maid knocked at the door; "you can attend to yourself for once."

"I can always, dear," Maude replied, and, indeed, she was very independent for a petted heiress.

The girl dismissed, Mr. Ridgeway drew his daughter close to him as she sat beside him on the couch, and talked to her gravely for a quarter-of-an-hour or so.

When he had finished every vestige of colour had died out of Maude's face, and a grey ashen look of terror and agony had crept over it instead.

She had trembled and cried a little as her father began speaking, but she was still and calm now.

"You understand!" he said, when at length he had finished.

"Yes, papa."

"Everything!"

"Yes."

"And you are not afraid!"

"No."

The word was spoken resolutely enough, and for answer he strained her to his heart and kissed her passionately.

"It is the only way," he said, "the only one. Heaven knows I have been more wronged than any one in this. Maude, my darling, we will begin afresh from this hour. We shall meet again to-night. I am going out now."

He went out of the room without trusting himself to say another word, and Maude admitted her maid, and attended to her toilette, looking and feeling like a woman in a dream.

"You do look white, miss!" that young person said, as she unplanned the bright, wavy masses of Maude's bright hair, and proceeded to brush it out. "You have overtaxed yourself somehow."

"Yes, I think I have," Maude said, mechanically. "I shall not go to the concert to-night, Bessie. Send some one to Mrs. Crawford to excuse me. She will be only too glad to have my place. There is some doubt about papa being able to come for me, and I do not care to drive home alone."

The message was sent, and Bessie permitted to have a couple of hours cutting for herself in the evening. She was to be in by ten, her young mistress told her; and Maude laid down on her dressing-room sofa, with her head throbbing, and her heart beating to get rid of her racking headache as best she could.

And the hours went on, and the evening deepened into night, and Bessie returned from her two hours of freedom, and asked if her mistress had rung.

"No one has heard a sound of her," the housekeeper said. "She must have fallen asleep. There are two men in the hall waiting for the master. He left word he would be in in an hour; but for them talking the house would be as quiet as the grave."

CHAPTER IV.

"It's a nasty night, Nancy. Put Mr. Arthur's slippers to the fire, and make the kettle boil."

"It don't rain a bit now, ma'am," Nancy replied, from the kitchen, where she was preparing something toothsome for her mistress's supper, while Mrs. Elton stitched away in the little parlour with the door open, for she was alone this evening; and to hear Nancy bustling about and speak to her sometimes was company, and did away with the feeling of nervousness that

would creep over her at times when she was all alone.

She had never got over that nervousness since the illness into which she had fallen after her husband's terrible death, though she did her best to subdue it. She did not like the dark, and shivered at the prospect of being left alone in the house.

The ghastly sight she had seen that day seemed to get into the shadowy corners somehow, and make her sick and prostrate with terror; so between her son and Nancy she was seldom left alone after dark. They affected to take no notice of her timidity, but they took care it should not be worked upon, hence the open doors and the familiar passages between Nancy's clean kitchen and the trim little parlour that it had been Arthur Elton's pleasure and pride to make as cosy as possible for his mother.

"Mr. Arthur won't be back before ten; I heard him say so," Nancy said presently, in an interval of fire-stirring and cooking. "I shall have a supper for him fit for a prince when he does come. The oven bakes beautifully to-night."

"I wish he was here," Mrs. Elton said. "I am always nervous when he is driving by himself."

"Bless me, there's nothing to be nervous about," Nancy said, somewhat sharply—but her way was to speak sharply. "You can't shut him up in a glass case; he ain't a baby now."

"I suppose I forget that sometimes," Mrs. Elton said. "I am a foolish old woman, I know, but if anything happened to my boy what would become of me, Nancy?"

"What would become of any of us?" Nancy said. "I don't know, I'm sure; but there ain't anything going to happen. Drat that door, there's somebody there, and my hands in these rissoles."

"I'll go," her mistress said. "It is only Evans's boy, I expect, with some papers Mr. Arthur ordered."

It was only Evans's boy, and Mrs. Elton took the papers he brought, and laid them down in the tiny hall, which her son declared was not large enough to swing a cat in, but which gave an air of superiority to Clematis Cottage nevertheless, and then his mother said no one wanted to swing a cat, so it did not matter.

It was a pretty little hall, natively arranged with a pretty coloured hanging lamp lighting it—just enough and not too much—and it looked very bright and pretty to-night, with a great bunch of flowers on the small table, and the light shining down on Arthur's belongings in the way of hats and whips, and other trifles indicative of the presence of a lord of the creation in the house.

"Dear boy," his mother muttered to herself, "I wish he would come."

She did not shut the door, but sauntered down the garden path to the gate. Her front garden was pretty, and she was proud of it, but it was invisible now, shrouded in a darkness that might be almost felt. There was no moon, and it was an exceptionally dark night, and Mrs. Elton stood looking over her gate into the road, only able to see as far as the nearest street lamp would allow her.

Enderleigh was not a brilliantly-lighted place. Its local Board spent as little as they could on the comforts of the ratepayers, and as much as they dared on themselves, and lamps were few and far between.

There was not one opposite Mrs. Elton's house; the nearest was two or three doors away, but there would be quite light enough for Arthur to drive up when he came home.

He had been out for a rare holiday, driving some distance in a borrowed trap, and the hour he had named for his probable return was close at hand. It had been raining hard during the evening, but, as Nancy said, it was fair now, and the wet lay in glistening pools in the roadway.

There did not seem to be a soul stirring in the village; Enderleigh was an early place, and most of the houses were shut up. Clematis Cottage was not in the main road that ran Londonwards through the village, but in an off-road that called itself Aloe-walk, by reason of a couple of those

spiky adornments in the garden of a large house further on. It was really only a lane, through which very little traffic passed, and which led to nowhere in particular, ending in a stile leading to some fields, through which there was a right of way into the high-road.

"You'd better come in, ma'am," called Nancy, from the kitchen; "you'll catch your death of cold."

"In a minute," Mrs. Elton replied. "It is not cold, Nancy."

She caught sight of a woman as she spoke—a tall, rather striking-looking figure, which she was certain she had never seen before. She was dressed in black, and as she went slowly by the house her face was visible in the narrow circle of light. It was a remarkable face, with such a disagreeable expression on it that Mrs. Elton could not help remarking it. It was full of rage and a curious expression of baffled hatred—baffled in something evidently, for she looked puzzled. She had been walking, for her clothes were bedraggled and wet, but though evidently tired she held herself erect and made her way towards the end of the lane, as if she were going over the stile into the fields.

"Wherever is she going?" Mrs. Elton said to herself. "Never into the wet fields to-night! Perhaps she had lost her way, and yet she did not look like a person who could lose herself; she looked able to do anything; a sort of—what's that?"

Something stirred in the garden of an unoccupied house next door to Clematis Cottage. The bushes were overgrown, and anyone might well hide there on a night like this.

"What is it? Who is there?" Mrs. Elton asked, wondering at her own courage in daring to peer into the darkness.

A low, sobbing moan was the only reply—a woman's voice, and full of misery; and she rushed through her own gate, and into the dark, wet bit of ground, forgetting that she was afraid of the dark or of anything else in her anxiety to help and succour whoever was in distress.

A woman was there, sure enough, crouching amongst the wet shrubs—a wet, weary creature, hardly able to speak, or ask for the aid she wanted.

"What are you doing here?" Mrs. Elton asked. "What is the matter?"

"I am dying, I think," was the faint answer. "I have lost myself. I want to get to the station at Enderleigh, and I have come wrong. They say it is two miles away, and—"

She burst into hysterical tears, and Mrs. Elton felt sure, somehow, that she was not being deceived—that, however the poor creature had come into such a plight, her story was true. The voice was hoarse and husky; exposure and fatigue had taken it quite away. But she could see that the figure was young and slim, and the hand she had taken was small and delicate.

"Two miles!" she said, "you must mean Stoke Enderleigh; that is quite two miles. You have misread your way sadly."

"Yes. I did not know, and I was tired and frightened. I was followed, I think, or else I fancied it. Did you see anyone just now?"

"I saw a woman," Mrs. Elton replied, "but she went away through the fields towards Ravenscroft. Stoke Enderleigh lies over yonder in exactly the opposite direction."

"And two miles off! Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do!"

The voice broke off into passionate sobs and wails, and the girl, for she was no more, sank down on the ground, as if utterly exhausted and worn out.

"Don't cry so," the kindly lady said gently. "Try and get up and come in a moment, and have a cup of coffee. Perhaps we may be able to think of something; anyway, you will be fitter to set out again."

"But I must be there by ten o'clock, or it will kill him. He will not know what has become of me, and I promised—it is a matter of life and death. Oh, papa—papa, what shall I do!"

"Is it your father you are going to meet?" "Yes, oh! yes. Life and death depends on my getting there. He trusted me, and he will think I have failed him; I had rather die."

"You shall not die if I can help it, whoever you are, or whatever your business may be. Come in with me."

To say that Nancy was surprised when her mistress came in with a dishevelled and mud-stained young woman, hardly able to support herself by her side, would be but a faint fashion of expressing that worthy woman's feelings.

"Not in there, ma'am, if you please," she said, in her very sourest tone, as her mistress would have taken her strange guest into the parlour; "kitchens is good enough for tramps any day. If the young woman's 'stericky a drop of cold water is the best thing for her, I should say."

"Get her a cup of coffee at once," Mrs. Elton said, in a tone that she so seldom put on that Nancy obeyed instantly whenever she heard it, "and eat a sandwich or two. This young lady," she noticed the girl's grateful look at the word, "has lost her way, and is sadly in need of a few minutes' rest and refreshment. She has to get to Stoke Enderleigh by ten o'clock somehow."

"She'll do it if she knows the way," Nancy said, gruffly.

"But I don't," the girl said, "and I cannot hire a conveyance. I have money; it is not that, but—"

"Hayday, mammy, who have you got here?"

None of them had heard Arthur drive up or open the door, and he was in the kitchen and staring in wondering amazement at the group by the fire before any of them were aware of his presence. The girl looked at him for a moment, and turned her head away with a startled cry.

"Don't be afraid, my dear; it is only my son," Mrs. Elton said. "Perhaps he will be able to help us."

"I think not; no one can help me," the girl said. "I must go. Heaven bless you for your compassion and help! You have given me new life by your timely assistance; some day, perhaps, I may be able to repay you. Show me the way and let me go."

She could scarcely make herself heard, she was so hoarse now. But Arthur looked at her with a puzzled face.

"I don't know her," he said to himself, "and yet—bah! I am slightly mad, I fancy. Where does this young lady want to go to, mother?" he asked, aloud, "and how comes she in such a plight?"

He might well ask, for the girl was a deplorable object. She seemed to have fallen, or been dragged through the wet bushes, and her hat was a shapeless mass, perfectly sodden with rain. She was very plainly dressed, but all her clothing had the unmistakable stamp of fashionable dressmaking about it; and her face was very refined and beautiful in its pallor.

"She wants to get to Stoke Enderleigh by ten o'clock," Mrs. Elton said; "she says it is life and death."

She was more coherent now, and could speak calmly. She reiterated her statement that she was going to meet her father, who had entrusted her with some business that was a matter of life and death almost. She had mistaken the Enderleigh she had come to for Stoke Enderleigh, where she ought to have been by this time, and knew of no way to repair her error. If they would tell her which way to take she would set off at once, and trust to reaching the place in time. She did not say in time for what; but it was a considerable junction, and Arthur Elton surmised that there was a train to catch.

"I will take you!" he said, suddenly; "I have not sent away the trap yet. I can drive her, mother. Can you find her a bonnet or something to put on her head?"

"I'll try," Mrs. Elton replied, and presently produced a close bonnet and a somewhat worn shawl, which she wrapped round her strange guest.

While she was attending to her, Nancy beckoned her master out into the hall with a severe face, and laid her hand on his arm.

"If we ain't all murdered in our beds this night, Mr. Arthur, it will be a blessing," she said, solemnly.

"Why?" he asked, with a light laugh.

"It's a plot, Mr. Arthur; a wicked plot, as sure as I stand here. That girl has just been sent to see what is in the house, and when you are gone right away the rest of the gang will come in and rob us. If you find us with our throats cut when you come back don't tell me I didn't warn you."

"I shan't be able to tell you much if such a catastrophe happens, you dear old goose," Arthur Elton said. "You'll be beyond the reach of any remarks of mine. Don't be silly, Nancy, and frighten my mother; she is right and you are wrong; the girl is a lady, it is easy to see that, whatever brings her into her present plight. Look up the place if you are afraid. I shan't be more than an hour away."

Almost without a word he led the pale girl out to the trap and helped her into it.

She lifted his mother's hand to her lips and kissed it before she went.

"Heaven will reward you," she said, "I cannot—at least, not now."

Then she turned suddenly to Nancy, who was grimly regarding her.

"You are mistaken in me," she said, with quiet dignity. "I am neither a tramp nor a beggar. Your master's house is safe for any machinations of mine or anyone belonging to me. You will know it some day."

"It's as well to make sure," Nancy said to herself, as her master drove off, and she secured the door with lock and chain. But she felt rebuked and particularly small for all that, and was proportionately cross and dignified during the hour of waiting for Arthur's return.

CHAPTER V.

ARTHUR ELTON and his companion drove on in silence till they were out of sight of the end of the lane where his mother lived, and then he spoke.

"You are shivering," he said. "I am afraid you have taken a bad cold. Have you been out in the rain long?"

"It seems like a lifetime," the hoarse voice said. And again there seemed a remembrance of something he could not recall in its tones.

He did not know it. He had never seen the white, haggard face that had come back to something like its own contour and expression under his mother's kind ministrations. And yet the presence of this trembling girl—he could feel her shivering violently under the old shawl—sent all sorts of wild images scudding through his brain.

"I missed my way," she said. "I took a train. I had it all written down, and I was to make my way to Stoke Enderleigh across some fields. I did not know there were two Enderleighs, and I took a wrong turning, and asked someone, and he sent me on and on till I nearly died at your mother's door; besides—"

"Besides, what, Miss—?—I have not had the pleasure of hearing your name yet!" Arthur said.

"I suppose no one thought of asking me," the girl replied, simply. "My name is Alice Smith. I am going to meet my father. Ah! I was not mistaken. I was followed. What shall I do?"

A woman was standing by the roadside and the lamps of the vehicle flashed their light on her face. It had a strangely vindictive expression, and the young man felt sure he had seen it before somewhere—he vainly tried to remember where.

"Is she looking for you?" he asked, and the girl said, "Yes," clutching his arm at the same time in a fashion that plainly told him her terror was real, whatever the cause of it.

"She does not recognise you, then," he said. "What harm can she do you?"

"She has been watching. I don't know how much she knows," was the agitated reply. "But she will stop everything if we do not elude her; and it is life and death—nothing else."

"She shall not catch us," Arthur Elton said, the mystery of the whole affair exciting him to dare anything, so that he helped the stranger to meet her father. Was she deceiving him, he

asked himself, as the good horse made his way through the mud as if he knew that something depended on his speed. "Is old Nancy right? Bah! we have nothing to lose, the mater and I. Thieves and assassins would have no motive in visiting our little home. Perhaps she is an escaped madwoman. By Jove! I never thought of that. Well, well, I shall soon know. If she really wants to get to Stoke Enderleigh someone will meet her there, and I shall see. Whoever she is I have helped her, poor thing, madwoman or not."

She was in a fair way to be very ill through her adventure. He could feel her shivering as she sat beside him and hear the chattering of her teeth now and then, in spite of her efforts to conceal her discomfort. He was very glad when the lights of the station appeared in sight.

"I am afraid you will have cause to repent of this night's adventure, Miss Smith," he said, as a fresh shudder passed over his companion. "I am afraid you have caught a terrible cold."

"It does not matter, so that I get to the station in time; anything afterwards is of no consequence," she said, eagerly. "Will you do me a favour?"

"If I can. What is it?"

"Will you let me get down here and go on by myself? Some day, perhaps, I shall be able to explain, to repay you for your kindness. I know what you must think of me, but I dare not risk letting you accompany me any farther, so much depends on my keeping my promise to papa to the letter."

"I have no right to pry into your affairs," Arthur Elton replied. "I promised to help you, and I have done it as far as I can; if I can be of no further use I will not be an impediment to you. Are you sure you are able to walk the distance now?"

"Oh, yes; I could walk miles further if I was sure of doing what I promised at the end of it."

He stopped the horse, and helped her down with a strange feeling that he was wrong in doing it, and she paused a moment and lifted his hand to her lips.

"Heaven bless you for what you have done, Mr. Elton," she said, and vanished up the dark path that led to the station, leaving him staring after her like a man bewitched.

"I must be mad," he said to himself, "stark, staring mad, fit only for Bedlam! What has happened! How came she here? Alice Smith! Bah! the whole thing is a hideous dream. I must see what becomes of her."

He drove to a point in the road from whence he could see the whole of the station platform. There were only two people waiting there—a man wrapped up in an overcoat and an old woman with a bundle.

The man was walking restlessly about, looking out into the darkness; the woman was seated on a bench, apparently thinking of nothing.

He saw the girl he had driven walk swiftly on to the platform, and the man catch her in his arms like one who had well-nigh given up hope. He could not hear what they were saying, or see their faces; but he could understand that their joy and thankfulness were very great.

A moment more and the train they wanted came thundering up, and they were gone, and Arthur Elton turned to go home again, full of wondering amazement.

The voice that he had heard, only too long to hear it again with a wild longing that he could not master, had sounded in his ears once more. For a moment, as she wished him good-bye and bade Heaven bless him, it had come back clear and full, and it was Maude Ridgeway who was talking to him under the black canopy of the starless sky.

He had been away from town pretty much for the past few days, and he had not heard of what was going on in the commercial world, nor how ugly rumours had been going about that Ridgeway's was shaky, and many another house on the verge of ruin.

With his head in a whirl he made his way back to Enderleigh to come face to face once more with the woman he had seen before—the person, of whom his companion had expressed herself afraid.

It was no dream then. The dark vindictive face was that of Maude's maid, the woman he had heard dismissed at the hotel at Bingen.

"You here!" he said, as she would have stopped him. "What do you want?"

"I want what you have helped to prevent my getting," she said, fiercely—"revenge!"

"On whom?"

"On Maude Ridgeway and her wicked father! I tracked her here. I should have found police somewhere to help me. You have taken her away. Do you know what her father is—the proud man whom the world has been thinking the real of honour? Do you know what you have done to-night, Mr. Arthur Elton! Take care, or the hand of justice may stretch out far enough to reach you, who have aided and abetted their escape."

"I don't know what you are talking about," the young man said, "nor what you have to do with Miss Ridgeway or her father. I am in no way acquainted with them."

"Will you swear that when you are questioned about them in a court of justice as having aided and abetted the escape of the greatest thief that ever cheated the detectives! He is flying, I tell you!—flying from the country with the fortunes of hundreds in his grasp! Everybody belonging to me has trusted to his honour, though I warned them, and we are all penniless. The City is ringing with his name. He tried to make his daughter marry his manager who was to have put things straight by more robbery and deceit; but he absconded this morning early, and the crash came at once. I tell you Maude Ridgeway had about her money and jewels that would have gone far to satisfy many of the claims that will be preferred against them. They are a pretty pair, father and daughter both. Curse them!"

She poured out her denunciation in such a torrent of words that he could not break in upon it in any way, and stood glaring and panting when she had done, like some revengeful animal.

"I don't believe what you say," he said, when he could find leave to speak. "I heard you were dismissed from Mr. Ridgeway's service some time ago in Germany, and your insolence then makes me better able to understand your vehemence now. Allow me to pass if you please; the horse will do you a mischief if you stand there—he is impatient to get home."

"Fool!" she blazed after him as he drove by her. "You will know I speak the truth some day."

But he touched the tired horse with the whip, and was soon out of reach of her bitter words.

"Oh, Arthur dear, such news!" was Mrs. Elton's salutation to him when he entered the house.

"News, mamma? Who has been bringing you news at this time of the night?"

"Mr. Turton, dear. He saw the light in the window, and came to ask if we had lost anything. But did you see that poor thing safe?"

"Quite safe, dear. Her father met her at the station—at least, I presume it was her father—and he appeared to be in a state of great excitement about her."

"And he was very thankful to you, of course!"

"Well, he might have been; but I did not speak to him. The young lady elected to go to the station by herself, and, of course, I could not intrude; but what is this wonderful news, you excitable little mater! What has happened to Mr. Turton?"

"Nothing, providentially; but he has only just escaped. The Dowlings down the lane have lost all their money."

"How!"

"The bank has gone—Ridgeway's. There has been a panic in the City, and ever so many more have failed, and the mob have broken all the bank windows, and at Mr. Ridgeway's house, too; but he has got away, and thousands of pounds with him. Mr. Turton only drew out his money last week; but the Dowlings are quite ruined, and some more people down here have lost a good deal. Had you anything in Ridgeway's, dear?"

"Not a farthing, mammy dear; set your heart at rest about that. Where are the papers? I never thought they would have news like that to-night."

"Has there been no whisper of it before?"

"None that I have heard. The only thing that ever came to my ears was that Ridgeway seemed to have as much difficulty in raising money as other people; but money has been tight, as it is called, with everyone lately."

The evening papers that Mrs. Elton handed to her son, and over which he sat poring till late into the night, were full of the miserable story of the banker's ruin and downfall.

There were nothing but hard words for the man who had striven with all his might to avert honestly the tide of ruin and disgrace that was overwhelming him, and who had literally left everything he had in the world to the mercy of his creditors.

The woman Nibbet had told him that he had gone away with thousands. She lied, and she knew she did while she was speaking. Maurice Ridgeway had taken nothing out of all his vast wealth but the little fortune that was his daughter's in her own right—a sum of money that had been left to her by a relation, and which he had managed to guard through all the vicissitudes of the past few months.

He had trusted to his manager. A crafty man, full of knowledge of the world, Mr. Dempster had wormed himself into his confidence, and gradually got more and more of the management of affairs into his hands, till at length he became far more the master than the banker himself. His were the gigantic frauds that were coming to light now with such fearful rapidity—his the schemes for raising money that were so iniquitous now that the light was let in upon them. His sudden abscinding exposed all that he had done and all that he hoped to get his principal to do in the future. It was unremediated. He intended to marry Maude, and so have her father still more in his power, making his beautiful wife useful as a decoy.

But Nemesis was on his track, and the awfully sudden death of a neighbour and coadjutor rendered it impossible for his nefarious practices to be concealed any longer.

There was nothing for it but flight, and in less than an hour from the time of the news of his friend's death reaching him he had left London with all the available cash in his possession.

It was a fortune in itself, and when the note that he left for Mr. Ridgeway was put into that gentleman's hands, he knew that all was lost, and that the only thing for him and his child was flight.

The news had flown all over London long before Maude knew anything about it. Hence the elights she received, and her presence at Stoke Enderleigh Station on this dismal night. She had shown herself brave and clear-headed in the sad emergency, and understood the necessity for her father's immediate departure.

He would have left her behind with friends, but she had stoutly combated his resolution.

"I must come with you, papa," she said, "wherever you are I must be there, too. Tell me what to do, and I will do it, and we will begin again together in some new country when we get away from here."

"Say if we get away, dear," Maurice Ridgeway said, as he folded her in his arms and kissed her. "I am a criminal flying from justice, my darling, and I may be caught."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. RIDGWAY was never caught. Whatever became of him and his daughter after Arthur Elton saw them depart by that night train, they managed to get out of the country undetected.

Perhaps the fact that Nibbet caught in a cold from her night's exposure as laid her completely up and nearly killed her helped in their escape. She proclaimed the fact far and wide that she had tracked them to Stoke Enderleigh; but her power and knowledge ended there, and no one seemed to have seen or heard anything of them afterwards.

Mr. Ridgeway and Maude had planned their journey, wherever it led to, with skill and forethought; and they had vanished, leaving sorrow and bitterness behind them everywhere—except in the remembrance of Arthur Elton.

"I must be going mad," he said to himself, day after day, when the memory of the fresh young voice he had heard at Bingen came back to him and waked anew the strange love that had possessed him for the speaker ever since.

In his waking hours, in his dreams, it was ever present with him, and the touch of the warm lips on his hand seemed to linger there as he heard in fancy every hour of the day the gentle thanks with which she rewarded him for the service he had rendered her.

"What a fool I was! What a blind, stupid fool not to recognise her!" he thought, forgetting that recognition would have been well-nigh impossible, even if he had been prepared for her appearance in his mother's house.

Who could have known that delicate, fastidious Maude Ridgeway in that sordid attire, drenched with rain and dabbled with mud? Who could possibly have recognised that sweet ringing voice in the hoarse, terrified tones that had implored his mother's aid?

He must see her again; he must find her. The world would never hold another woman for him while she lived, albeit he had only spoken to her on one occasion, only heard her voice twice.

Love plays strange pranks with men or women whom his shafts have once touched. He is an unreasoning and unmeaning tyrant; but, like all tyrants, he will have his own way. He had forced an entrance into the somewhat grave and reserved nature of Arthur Elton, and he was not to be dislodged.

Two years passed by—two successful and busy years as far as he was concerned—years of peace and prosperity at Clematis Cottage.

Ridgeway had come to be looked upon as a thing of the past, and the banker was generally supposed to be dead.

He was a man with very few relations; indeed, none, for he had begun life as a nameless orphan, and all the kindred he had ever known had come to him by his marriage with Maude's mother.

The commotion that had passed over Enderleigh through the ruin of one or two of the inhabitants when the back went was all over and well-nigh forgotten.

The family whom Mr. Turton, the vicar, had told Mrs. Elton of, and whom she had called to her son "the Dowlings," had given up their fine house and all their appendages of wealth, and had come to be content with the empty house next door to Clematis Cottage, in the garden of which Maude Ridgeway had hidden herself on that miserable night.

They were sensible, uncomplaining people, and the head of the house accepted his altered fortunes, and went to work to get a living with an energy and perseverance that did him credit; and the ladies of his household settled down with as little murmuring as could be expected to their new life, and were very pleasant neighbours to Mrs. Elton and her son, on whom they had looked down ever so little in the days of their prosperity.

"She is not dead," Arthur would say to himself when, on rare occasions, he heard the banker and his daughter mentioned. "I should know it if she were. I shall see her again some day. I shall hear her sweet voice and feel the pressure of her gentle hand—perhaps take her in my arms, my own—my wife—who knows! Bah! I must not think of it; I must not dream of it. But she is not dead—I am sure of that."

It was in the third year after the failure of the bank, and news had come to the English papers of the suicide of a wretched man who had been a drunkard and a gambler in the slums of New York, but who had turned out to be the absconding manager whose flight had brought about the immediate catastrophe of Mr. Ridgeway's downfall.

"Ah, we shall hear something of the same sort about his master some of these days," Mrs. Elton said, and her son looked up from the paper and shook his head.

"No, mammy," he said.

"What makes you think so, dear?"

"I can hardly tell, but I do think so. Whatever is heard of that gentleman will be to his credit. He was no intentional defaulter, and he took nothing but his child's fortune. All that was said to the contrary was a lie."

"Yes, I know, dear, that much was proved. What makes you always such a champion of his, Arthur? You didn't know him, did you?"

"I saw him once, that was all," Arthur replied. Not even to his mother could he admit that Maude Ridgeway was the unknown girl he had fallen in love with.

He pictured her a dozen times a day sitting by his mother's side under the big may tree, where she was sitting this sunny, summer morning, with the newspaper in her hand and the flowers falling about her as if they loved her gentle presence, and the birds singing over her head as if they would crack their little throats in their joy at the sunshine and the beauty of the world of flowers and trees.

She was a beautiful woman still, though she was past the meridian of her life. Hers was a face that grew sweeter with advancing years, and the white hair that lay in soft bands under her lace cap was abundant and silky still.

Her son was wont to say, with loving pleasure and pride in her, that his mother could hold her own still amongst the brightest beauties in the kingdom.

"There's the postman," she said, looking up as the familiar rat-tat sounded at the front door. "Are you expecting any letters, Arthur?"

"Not specially," he said, "but letters are like a good many other things—come when you least expect them sometimes. Well, Nancy, what is it?"

"A registered letter, please, sir," Nancy replied. "Here's a pen."

He laughed and told her she was too good to save his legs in that way, and he took the pen she had dipped in ink and brought out and signed the necessary document.

The letter was a small, hard parcel, addressed in a hand he did not know.

"What is it?" his mother asked.

"Can't tell till I open it, mammy dear. Why, what on earth—"

He stopped in utter amazement, as well he might. The little packet contained two articles—one addressed to his mother and one to himself—tiny packets, but of rare value.

A diamond ring was in each, of such lustre that the sunbeams flashed from them in a thousand sparkles of many-coloured lights as he undid the soft papers and held them in his hand.

The lady's ring was a half-hoop of fine stones, splendidly set—the gentleman's a single diamond of a wonderful lustre. On the wrapping of each was written in a delicate female hand, "In loving remembrance, from Alice Smith."

"They are alive then," was all Arthur Elton could say for a moment, and the words "loving remembrance" seemed to dance and flash before his eyes as he read them again and again.

She had thought of him, and sent him this token of her gratitude for his little service.

"What are you thinking of, mammy, dear?" he asked, presently, as Mrs. Elton sat looking at the flashing gems on her finger. "You are looking afar off."

"I was wondering, dear, whether we ought to keep these," she replied. "Whether they are not—"

"I don't see what else we can do," her son said, quietly. "We cannot very well send them back without knowing where they come from. There is nothing to tell us."

There was not—not a line or a word to indicate where the sender could be found. They had been posted in London at the General Post Office, and bore only the Enderleigh postmark besides.

(Continued on page 618.)

At the beginning of the present century the Bible could be studied by only one-fifth of the earth's population. Now it is translated into languages which make it accessible to nine-tenths of the world's inhabitants.

AVICE FOLEY'S ORDEAL.

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CHAPTER V.

LIFE at Lyngard Court resumed the even tenor of its way, and was not much affected by the return of the master of the house, who was out nearly all day, either shooting with the keepers or following the hounds.

Maraquita, on her way upstairs, or looking through the window of her own room, would often see him come in with his red coat spashed and muddy, and his eyes brighter and more eager with the excitement of sport; and Lady Lyngard thought to herself, with a satisfied smile, that he had certainly grown less taciturn and reserved since his home-coming, and wondered if Avice Foley had anything to do with the improvement.

In the evening he seldom or ever lingered at the dinner-table after the ladies had left, but followed them into the drawing-room, where he would seat himself close to the piano, and lie back in an easy chair, listening while Maraquita sang, or leaning forward to tell her the events of the day, and ask in return what she had been doing—Lady Lyngard meanwhile dicing over her kitting on the couch, and perfectly unconscious of there being any risk in such unrestrained intercourse between her nephew and the grave young girl, in whose discretion she had implicit faith.

But for Maraquita those hours were golden ones—such as life could never again offer. Upstairs to her room, after all the household had retired, she would walk backwards and forwards, recalling every word he had said, and dwelling on each with a swift, unconscious delight, as if the mere fact of their being addressed to her had given her some right to them; and then she would bring before her memory that dark, strong face, with its sombre, unsatisfied eyes—eyes that seemed ever looking for something they had not as yet discovered.

At first she did not question why this was, or what had caused the change that had transformed her whole being; but one night, as she stood at her window looking out on the frosty splendour of the stars, the knowledge came to her like a revelation, and she knew she loved him with the one love of her life.

Yes, unasked, unthought, she had yielded up her heart, even while she felt how foolish, hopeless, mad she was. Sir Piers was a man of rank and fortune, and would mate with some lady—Avice Foley, perhaps—of his own station, who would bring him, in addition to riches, a noble name.

These were not the days when kings trampled their purple underfoot to consort with beggar-maids; and Love, powerful as he may be, has to yield to social distinctions, as she was well aware. And yet—even if she had had the power she would not have recalled the gift; for she knew that, though girl round with thorns, her life was all the sweeter, and better, and purer since it had been crowned with

"The crown of all humanity!"

One afternoon, about a week after the skating excursion, Avice Foley drove over to the Court, and when she got there sent the groom back with the carriage, saying she preferred walking home.

"I wish you would come with me as far as the village," she said to Maraquita. "You are looking rather pale, and a breath of fresh air would do you good."

"Yes, my dear, go," added Lady Lyngard, kindly. "You haven't been out all day, and I shan't want you this afternoon."

So presently the two girls set off together through the park, which looked rather dismal. It did not rain, but the skies were low, the atmosphere was damp and warm, a clammy moisture hung in drops on the boughs, and from the hollows faint wreaths of white mist were rising in pale exhalations. Avice shivered slightly as she glanced around.

"Are you much affected by the weather?" she

said. "I am—days like this make me feel actually miserable."

"February is not a pleasant month," Maraquita answered, rather tritely.

"I shall be so glad when spring comes," Avice added, with the restlessness that had lately fallen upon her, and which had caused her mother considerable anxiety.

Mrs. Foley, however, said nothing, being in her generation a wise woman, and possessing that qualification in which most of her sex are so lamentably deficient—the power of knowing when to be silent.

On their way to the village, after leaving the wood, the girls had to pass the "Wilderness," which, with its dense plantation of untrained shrubs and ragged-looking trees, above which the chimneys of the house itself were only just visible, presented an appearance of inexpressible desolation.

"What could have induced Dr. Lascelles to live in such a place?" said Maraquita. "He surely might have found another house, much better situated as regards his practice, and less likely to frighten his patients away. He must be an ascetic to wish for such solitude!"

Avice did not respond—the question was one she had frequently asked herself, and without ever obtaining a satisfactory answer.

Involuntarily she slackened her pace, and as they got close to the high iron gates both she and Maraquita came to a sudden standstill.

Inside, and gazing from between the bars, was a woman, yet young as it seemed, but whose exact age it would have been a difficult matter accurately to determine, seeing that although her features were pale and wan a look of youth still lingered about the sensitive mouth, whose lips were twitching nervously. She had been, nay, was still, beautiful; but there was a latent wildness in her large, dark eyes, a curious uncertainty in her expression, that indicated an intellect shaken from its balance, and left no doubt of her mental condition.

As she saw the girls she beckoned them forward.

"Can you undo the gate?" she exclaimed, eagerly, though in tones that hardly rose above a whisper. "They have locked it and taken the key, so that I shan't escape, and it's too high for me to climb, even if I could get over the spike at the top. Do you think you could unfasten it from the outside?"

At first they stared at her in an astonishment too great for words.

Evidently she was an inhabitant of the house, for she wore thin slippers on her feet, and had no cloak or shawl over her black cashmere dress; and more than that she was a lady, as one glance was sufficient to assure them.

"Where do you want to go to?" inquired Maraquita, gently, and advancing a little nearer.

"Anywhere—away from here!" was the eager response. "If I can only get into the road I shall be free, and I will hide myself where he shall never find me again."

"But who are you?" exclaimed Avice, who had grown very pale.

The poor creature looked at her intently, then put her hand to her brow and shook her head.

"Is it not strange—I have forgotten!" she said, with great surprise. "I have often tried to think it out, but somehow it always escapes me. At times I get very near—very near, and lay hold of the clue, and then it slips away again."

"But—you are married," added Avice, glancing at the gold circlet on her third finger, and noticing that the handkerchief she held in her hand was marked with the initials "A. L."

"Yes, I am married. I was married a long while ago, but now my husband is tired of me, and he keeps me away from everyone, and doesn't even let people know I exist. Shall I tell you why? Because he has grown to love someone else better, and would like to marry her. It is bad of him—is it not?"

With a sudden gesture Avice put her hands up to her face to hide the pallor she felt was deepening over it. "He has grown to love someone else better!"

This, then, was Lascelles' secret—this was the reason why he had said honour should have kept

him away from her, why he had no right to ask any woman to marry him—he had a wife living, and she was mad!

She seemed to see it all so clearly now—the explanation of his strange words, as well as his motive in coming to this lonely dwelling, and trying his best to isolate himself—it was as plain as daylight, and if she had been alone the girl would have cried aloud in the bitterness of her pain at the revelation.

As it was, she made a great effort, and succeeded in controlling herself; and, luckily for her, Maraquita's attention was too absorbed for her to notice her agitation. At that juncture there was a sound of hasty footsteps, and the woman inside the gates listened a minute, and then held up her finger.

"It is Justice, come to look for me!" she muttered, below her breath; and without another word, glided swiftly along a side path as Dr. Lascelles's housekeeper appeared from behind a clump of laurels, and without noticing the two girls in the road, followed the direction her prisoner had taken.

"What a strange occurrence!" exclaimed Maraquita. "Who can she be?"

But Avice did not respond, and so they walked on in silence until they came to the entrance of the village, where they had arranged to part.

"I think," Avice then said, rather nervously, "perhaps we had better not say anything of what we have seen at the 'Wilderness'; it may be Dr. Lascelles would not like it, and—"

"I agree with you, and for my part shall never mention it; for, whoever she may be, the poor creature is undoubtedly insane," Maraquita answered; and then they said good-bye, and she turned back in the direction of home.

Before she had proceeded very far she heard behind her the sound of footsteps, and a minute later Sir Piers Lyngard came up to her side.

"Good evening, Miss Leigh!" removing his hat, and smiling down at her. "What brings you here, all alone?"

"I have just parted from Avice," she replied, striving to control her voice, so that he should not notice the thrill of gladness that was in it; "it seems to me twilight has come on more quickly than usual to-night."

"Yes," he said, glancing round, "the clouds are very low, and most probably we shall have rain before long. If you'll allow me to do so I'll escort you back; it isn't exactly pleasant for a lady to walk through the wood alone."

He took his place by her side, not talking at first, but ever and anon stealing glances at the tall, slim figure, in its dark brown seal mantle. Maraquita herself broke silence.

"Avice told me she and her mother were going to town soon."

"Indeed!" carelessly, and as if the subject did not particularly interest him.

"She is to be presented this season," added the young girl, "and no doubt will make a sensation, for she is very pretty."

"She is, very," he assented, smiling; "my aunt was talking to me about her last night, and telling me—but what do you think she told me?"

"I don't know."

"That she would make me a charming wife!"

Maraquita was silent, but as long as she lived she never forgot the strange, cold pain that shot through her heart at his words. She had known so well it must come, had prepared herself even for some such announcement as his approaching marriage; nevertheless, as she looked across the cold, grey landscape, with its skeleton trees and low-lying fields, a horrible feeling of desolation came over her; it seemed so much like her own life—dreary, tear-misted, eternally lonely.

"I suppose, as I've come home, and really intend to settle down, it's necessary to give the Court a mistress," he went on, very deliberately, "and Lady Lyngard is of opinion I could not select a better than Avice Foley. What do you say, Miss Leigh?"

"She is very pretty, very sweet, very good," Maraquita returned, steadily, and looking straight before her, though she saw no more of the scene than if a dark curtain had been unrolled in front of her eyes.

"Yes, she is all these, I confess, and I suppose I must be ultra fastidious not to be satisfied; but I have strange ideas on the subject of matrimony. Shall I tell you what they are? It seems to me that in a wife one wants so much more than beauty, or amiability, or a given list of attractions. All these are to be desired, but they are a nothing as compared with the one great thing—sympathy! It has always been a fancy of mine that somewhere in the world are the two people who have been destined by Fate for each other; and when she brings them together, as she does occasionally, a perfect union is the result. I have thought very little of marriage, far less than most men of my age; but I have had a sort of idea that I should some day come across the woman who was to complete my life, and I was right, for I have found her!"

They had come to a gate giving access to the wood through which they must pass; and now he stopped, putting his back against it, and facing her—rather whiter than usual, as she could see him in the dim light.

"I have found her!" he repeated, in tones that were almost solemn through excess of feeling. "Do you know who she is?"

Marquitta did not speak, but, unconscious of the action, she clasped her two hands across her heart, which threatened to choke her with its wild beating.

"It is yourself!" he exclaimed; "and though at the commencement you avoided my presence, though you struggled against your feelings as hard as you could, and fought with all your maiden pride, you were forced at last to give in, and acknowledged yourself conquered by love and me!"

He drew her to him, resisting at first; and then yielding with a shy, tremulous joy as he held her against his breast, and pressed on her lips a kiss, the remembrance of which would live as long as she herself did!

It never struck her till afterwards how masterful his wooing was, how entirely he took it for granted she returned his affection! For the moment, indeed, and in the tumult of her happiness, she thought of nothing except that a gift, greater than the power and rank and riches of the world, was given her; that the joy she had pictured in her dreams, and thought of in her waking hours as something infinitely sweet, but as far beyond her reach as the stars in the sky, was suddenly yielded to her keeping.

A minute later, other reflections came and she drew herself away.

"Have you thought of what you are doing?" she said, brokenly. "Do you know—?"

"I know I am asking you to be my wife; and I know you love me—two facts before which all others fade into veriest insignificance."

"You wish me to be your wife—me!—who am so much below you in every way—of whom you know literally nothing!"

He laughed, almost contemptuously.

"My darling, what does that matter! Do you think love pauses to ask for references? What does it signify to me that your position is, in the world's eyes, below my own? It is enough for me that you are yourself! That the tone of your voice, the touch of your hand, the sound of your footsteps even, is sufficient to make me happy. Love is such a grand thing, Marquitta—it makes its whole world of what would be to outsiders the veriest trifles!"

Does it not sometimes happen in this great rush of events we call "life," and in which we are for ever hurrying onwards, there comes a sudden lull when the present holds us in its clasp; and ceasing to look either backwards or forwards we acknowledge the pain and sadness of being is more than redeemed by its joys of which we now taste?

Such moments came to those two, standing there in the chill February twilight, with the sombre shadows of the wood behind them, and the mist rising damply over the dim meadows on either side—moments which in the future would return with Tennyson's words—

"That is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow, is remembering
happier things!"

Unfortunately, perfect content must always be of short duration, and Marquitta was roused from her trance by the thought of what her lover would say when she confessed she was living under a false name, and had run away from home because her father kept a gambling house!

She knew she ought to tell him at once. Conscience whispered its warning, and honour said: "Loose no time in letting him know the truth; trust all to his love!" But her heart took up the burden, and cried out: "No! not to-night. Let me be, for a few hours at least, cloudlessly radiantly happy, and in the morning he shall hear everything. I have had so much sorrow. I will have this one night of joy!"

"You are sure you love me—it is not a fancy that will die, or will change, or will weary!" she said to him, feverishly, as she drew herself from his embrace, and looked up into his tender eyes.

"Dearest one, no! It is the love poets have written of, and artists have painted, and men and women have died for!"

"And it is your first love?"

"Yes, I have had fancies, as have most men of over thirty; but I have never really cared for anyone before. Why do you ask?"

"Because I thought perhaps your long absence from home might have been the result of a disappointment caused by a woman."

"No," he said, his face darkening, "it was caused by a man; but you shall hear the story, and then you will understand it all. Are you cold?" he added, anxiously. "Shall I wait till we get home before I tell it you?"

She gave an impatient negative to both questions; and in proof of her words pulled off her glove and slipped her hand in his, to show him how warm it was; and then, after a little pause, he went on—

"It is not a very long tale, but it seems fitting that as it embodies what has been so far the motive spring of my life, it should be told now that my life's happiness is consummated. Well, to begin at the beginning, I was, as you are aware, the son of the late baronet's brother, who died when I was quite a boy, leaving two children—myself and my brother Horace. He was twelve months younger than I; and even from our babyhood, there existed between us that close bond of fellowship which grew with our growth, and strengthened with our years, until, as we became men, it developed into an affection like David and Jonathan's—one passing the love of women. I dwell on this, so that you may understand why I was so powerfully affected by what followed. He was the one creature in all the world I did care for; and it is a small thing to say, I would have made any sacrifice in my power to benefit him; for, in truth it would have given me joy to have done so, if only for the sake of affording a proof of how dear he was to me. He grew up handsome, bright, and clever—one of those boys of whom men prophesy great things, and whom women loved to pet for the sake of his blue eyes and sunny smile. I was not blind to his faults, though so keenly alive to his virtues; and I knew that if he was brave, generous, and tender-hearted, he was also reckless, and easily enough influenced by his inclinations.

"Well, we were together till he came of age, I being at that time twenty-two; but, in reality, years older than he was, by reason of the difference in our characters. And then my uncle wished me to go to America in order to look after some extensive silver mines there in which he had invested a great deal of money; and so I said good-bye to England and left with the intention of being away a year. Fifteen months later I returned, wondering very much how it was I had not heard from Horace for so long, and went straight to Lyngard Court, where I found my uncle and aunt in terrible distress on his account.

"It appeared he had, in London, made the acquaintance of a man who I myself had met once or twice, and whose name was Leclercq, with him he had gone on the Continent, and, as it seemed, plunged into a course of reckless extravagance and dissipation, which could have but

one end—ruin. Time after time he wrote to my uncle for money, and at last Sir Charles positively refused to send him more, and kept his resolution, in spite of all his entreaties. Of course, this intelligence threw me in such a fever of anxiety that, rather than endure the suspense, I set out for Homburg the very day after my return, and on my arrival went straight to the rooms my brother had occupied, and found him there—lying stark and cold on the bed—shot through the heart!"

Sir Piers paused a moment, his voice low and hoarse, then he continued—

"The only person near was a young man who had been his friend, and from whom I learned the full details of his murder—for that is what it was morally, although society might give it a milder name. I heard how Leclercq had been always with him, leading him into every kind of dissipation, where he was ever at his side, sharing his money with him as long as it lasted, and finally deserting him when he had got out of him all he could.

"Then, it seemed, one evening, goaded to desperation by debts he was unable to pay, and stared in the face by actual want—for he had got rid of every available article he possessed, and shame kept him from appealing to me—Horace went to Leclercq and begged for a few pounds, which his friend deigned to lend, accompanying his refusal with bitter, sneering taunts that drove the poor boy almost to frenzy. He accused him of being his evil genius, of plundering him, of forging his uncle's signature, and finally struck him, an insult Leclercq avenged by challenging him to fight—he himself being a noted duelist and a perfect master of sword and pistol. The latter weapon was selected by Horace, and a meeting took place, the result of which might have been confidently anticipated; for while Leclercq escaped perfectly unhurt, his dupe fell dead at the first shot.

"Marquitta," Sir Piers said, all his control insufficient to subdue his emotion, "even after all these years, after the vicissitudes of a life which has passed through many strange phases, and should by this time have learned how to keep down passion with a strong hand, I feel upon me the same lust for vengeance that came over me at the sight of that boy's fair, dead face. I see him again lying there, with the wound in his breast, and the stamp of an eternal despair on his features, the stranded wreck of a life Heaven meant to have been so noble. It must be true we have something of the Satan in us, and it rose up in my soul then, strangling all softer feelings, and crying out for retribution, which only the blood of the murderer could satisfy, and which I swore I would do my best to obtain. Well, I buried him, and left him in foreign soil, under foreign skies; and before I went away I found that an acceptance of my uncle's had been forged, presumably by Horace, but really, as I believe, by Leclercq.

"And this was the last and most terrible blow to Sir Charles; for he had ever been so tenacious of his family honour, so proud of the name that had come down unstained to us from ancestors who had also gloried in its purity, that the shock of finding it disgraced, if it did not actually kill him, certainly hastened his end.

"Then the title and estates descended to me; and then, being completely my own master, I began the search for Leclercq, to which I had vowed myself above Horace's dead body. He had disappeared directly after the duel, leaving no trace behind him; and though I went systematically to work, though I waited patiently and spared neither pains nor money; though, in effect, I devoted myself to the task, body and soul, it was all of no avail, and after three years' search I confess myself baffled, for I had not even a clue to his whereabouts. Then it struck me he must have left the Old World, and gone either to America or Australia; so thither I followed, and travelled almost from one end to the other of the great Continent; but still with the same result, until at last I fancied I obtained information of his having been in Vienna, and so I came back to Europe, and went to the Austrian capital, where I found a man answering in every particular to his description, had just died by his

own hand. This, I have no doubt, was Leclercq, and Heaven had avenged poor Horace's death without my intervention. Thus my object attained, although not in the manner I had anticipated, I returned home, and— You know the rest, darling."

She could not speak to him—in the presence of such a sorrow as his words would have seemed too slight—neither could she remind him of what is written in the Book, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay;" but she put both her arms round his bronzed neck, and perhaps that action carried its message of love and sympathy more completely than the most eloquent language could possibly have done.

CHAPTER VI.

"WHAT was that?" exclaimed Maraquita, suddenly lifting her head from her lover's shoulder, as a rustling of the leaves was faintly audible behind them.

"A rabbit, perhaps, or some other denizen of the wood," he responded. "But how nervous you are. You seemed quite startled!"

"Because I have a feeling of unreality about me this evening. It seems to me that I am in a dream, and shall wake up presently and find all my happiness vanished," she said, with a slight shudder. "Oh, Pier! I think I should die if anything came between us now."

"What can come between us, darling! Our love is strong enough to defy Fate itself."

Vain words, destined to come back to him in the aftertime, and mock him with the emptiness of their vaunting.

He bent down and kissed her, and then, with tenderest, gentlest touches smoothed back the hair from her brow, telling her again and again how dear she was to him, and how all his life should be devoted to the task of making her happy, picturing a future in which they were to walk hand-in-hand until death claimed them as his own.

Talking thus time passed very quickly, and it was only the distant echo of the Court clock striking the hour that recalled them to the knowledge of how late it was growing.

"We must go home now or my aunt will be wondering what has become of you," he said, with a long regretful sigh, as he offered her his arm and pushed the gate open. "Will you tell her of our engagement, May, or shall I?"

"She need not be told yet," Maraquita said, feverishly. "Let us keep it to ourselves until to-morrow. Our love seems so much more our own when only we two know of it."

He smiled, but promised compliance with her wishes; and as they walked back, it may be he hoped she would have told him something of herself and her life before she came to the Court, but in this expectation he was disappointed, for she spoke very little, nothing at all of her own private concerns.

A great, solemn awe seemed to have fallen on her with the joy of knowing how dear she was to him, and in its presence all lesser considerations seemed sacrilege.

Half way back to the Court a brougham, drawn by a pair of greys, passed them, its lamps flashing on their faces, and revealing them with perfect distinctness to the occupant of the carriage—none other than Mrs. Foley—who leaned forward, and was quick to observe that Maraquita's arm was drawn through that of Sir Pier's, while both their features are radiant with—

"The light that was never yet on land or sea."

Perhaps, seeing it, she recognised its meaning; at any rate, she sank back amongst her cushions, a bright red flaming into her usually pale cheeks, while a muttered exclamation of anger trembled on her lips.

She was no better placed than the generality of people, who see the gorgeous castle they have taken such pains to erect fall in fragments at their feet, and dissolve into the thinness of thin air.

As soon as they reached home Maraquita went

to her own room, where Lady Lyngard—who lived in a constant state of terror against damp—had caused a fire to be lighted. She took especial pains with her toilette, changing her walking attire for the black lace, which was about the only decent evening dress she possessed, and fastening at her bosom a bunch of scarlet geraniums which she had cut in the greenhouse that morning, and than which nothing could have been more becoming to her bright, dark beauty.

Afterwards, finding she had still half-an-hour to spare before the dinner bell would ring, she sat down in front of the fire, and clasping her hands over her knees, lost herself in a happy dream of sweet recollections, that not even the anticipation of what she must to-morrow tell Sir Pier's connecting her past life had power to embitter.

That he would be grieved and shocked she knew quite well; but she had already such implicit trust in his love that it never entered her head to doubt it, and she was even conscious of a certain sense of elation as she thought of how triumphantly it would stand the test of discovering its object's utter friendlessness.

He cared for her for herself, and no accident of poverty, not even her father's unworthiness, and the discreditable life he led, would have any effect on him. Had he not said Fate itself was powerless to separate them!

Her reverie was broken in upon by a slight noise like that produced by a handful of small gravel being thrown against the window, and this, after a minute, was repeated rather more loudly.

Wondering what the meaning of it could be, and suddenly awaking to the fact that her blind was not drawn, and that her movements could therefore be seen by anyone outside, she opened the rash, and leaned forward to look down; and presently, from among the shadows cast by the house, she made out the darker one of a man's figure, standing just below, and apparently watching her.

Somewhat alarmed, she drew back, and a minute later a stone was thrown in, and fell on the carpet, having been made the means of conveying a letter, which was wrapped round it.

Maraquita paused a moment looking at it before she picked it up. A strange tremor came upon her, a presentiment perhaps of what its contents might prove; then she resolutely opened it, but sank down on her chair, white and trembling, as she saw the writing, for—it was her father's!

It was short enough, and characteristically to the point.

"You see"—it said, "I have discovered your hiding place, but as I desire to spare you such a scene as would take place if I came to Lyngard Court, and insisted on your returning with me, I wish to speak with you before making any final arrangements for the future. I shall be in the plantation, by the little wicket-gate at the end, at ten o'clock, and you must contrive to meet me without fail. Destroy this note, and let no one suspect you have received it.—P.C."

That was all, but she read it over two or three times, thinking to herself there must be some fatality in his having found her on this particular evening. How he had managed it she could not imagine; for Lady Chetwynd, the mother of her old school friend at the convent, was the only person who knew where she was, and she had most faithfully promised to keep this secret from everyone—more especially from Paul Chevassé. Indeed, it had been Lady Chetwynd who had suggested the necessity of the young girl's concealing her identity under the name of "Leigh," and who had taken so great an interest in her welfare that she had procured her the post of companion to her own friend, Lady Lyngard, and provided her with all the requisite credentials.

Still, as he was in possession of her secret, it mattered little now how he had obtained his knowledge. What she had to consider was the effect his presence would have on her relations with Sir Pier, and whether he would consent to

her engagement. She knew he could, if he liked, withhold it, and prevent her marrying until she came of age; but surely he would not do this—surely he would hesitate before sacrificing her happiness for the sake of his own selfish ends!

At any rate, she must meet him, and let her conduct be guided by the attitude he himself adopted towards her.

Meanwhile Mrs. Foley had reached home, and her first question, as her maid came forward to help her to divest herself of her wraps, was, "Where is Miss Avie?" "In her room me'ain," responded the girl: "she came home some time ago, and I noticed how strange she looked, and then she told me she didn't feel very well, and was going to lie down."

There was nothing very alarming in this; but Mrs. Foley lost no time in hastening to the young girl's apartment, and there she found her, reclining on the couch, her eyes dry and bright, but her face as white as the snowdrops outside, and pitifully sad in its expression of hopeless sorrow. Old people often laugh at the griefs of their children, and tell them youth knows nothing of what misery really is; but, in effect, it is in youth that we do suffer, when the feelings are keenest, and vibrate most easily to the influences of pain or pleasure. Age brings more prosaic troubles, perhaps, but it also lends the endurance to bear them; and, besides this, blunts the edge of the perceptions, and hence prevents their being felt with the vividness of earlier years.

To Avie, however, it seemed as if a dark curtain had been drawn between her and happiness, and that nothing the future could ever give would compensate for what she now suffered.

Loving Lancelotti as she did, and believing he cared for her in an equal degree, she could not blame him, as conscience whispered she ought to have done, for dallying with the temptation of being near her. She pictured what his life must be with that poor mad woman who was his wife, lonely, miserable, devoid of sympathy. Surely it would plead as his excuse for conduct that all the sophistry in the world could not absolutely condone. Out of her pain and bewilderment only one thing made itself clear—that they must not meet again.

"What ails you, my pet?" her mother asked, as she laid her hand gently on her temples—hot, and throbbing with excitement.

"Nothing—at least, I think I have a cold," she answered hastily, "if you'll let me lie here quietly for the rest of the evening I shall be all right to-morrow."

"But won't you have anything—hadn't a doctor better see you?"

"No—oh, no—I only want to be left alone," Avie responded. Then, a minute later, becoming aware of the ungraciousness of her manner, she took her mother's hand, and pressed it to her cheek. "Forgive me, mamma!" she exclaimed, with loving contrition; "I didn't mean to be cross, only—I am so unhappy!"

She leaned her head on Mrs. Foley's shoulder, and burst into a passionate flood of weeping; then, almost before she knew what she was doing, and certainly before she had thought of the consequences, the whole story of her trouble was out.

"And—oh! mamma—the worst of it all is I cannot help loving him even yet!" sobbed the poor child, hiding her face, and the burning blushes that covered it.

She was very young, and her longing for sympathy so intense, that, having once opened her lips, she told all that was in her heart without reservation, and felt in some degree comforted.

Hers was not such a nature as Maraquita's—strong, self-reliant, and capable of suffering in silence.

She had once told Lady Lyngard she could not live without love, and it was quite true; for she was like some fragile, climbing plant, that will fall drooping to the ground, and die, unless it finds a support to cling to.

Mrs. Foley had no word of blame for the young girl's former reticence; whatever she may have thought of it she kept to herself.

"My dearest, such troubles as these come to all of us at some period of our lives," she said, her voice softening as it softened to no other creature under Heaven; "and the best we can do is to trust to time to cure them. You think now, perhaps, they are incapable of being cured, but wait—and then you'll find I am right. I shall take you away from here, and we must see what effect change has upon you. And now lie still and rest, and a cup of tea shall be brought as soon as possible."

She kissed her again, and went out to order the tea, and just then a footman came to inform her that a gentleman was waiting in the library.

"A gentleman!" she repeated, knitting her brows, perplexedly—for a visitor at this hour was not at all usual—"did he give his name or a card?"

"No, ma'am, but he said he had come on important business, and that he must see you at once."

Thinking it might possibly be her lawyer down from London, she proceeded to the library, where she found awaiting her a man of between forty and fifty, with a long black beard and moustache, and piercing dark eyes. He was attired in a cloak, and broad brimmed hat, and only removed the latter as she entered.

"Well," he said, at length, and after a pause, during which she had been gazing at him very intently; "so you don't recognize me?"

She started violently, and put up her hand to her brow.

"You!" she exclaimed, in a low whisper. "But I thought you were dead."

"And the wish was father to the thought, I suppose," he added, with a mocking laugh. "No; from certain motives of prudence I had reported that I had gone over to the majority; but, as a matter of fact, I was never better in my life—although, no doubt, you find me altered."

"Very much. You have grown a beard and moustache, and it makes all the difference to your face. Besides, you look a great deal older."

"Naturally time, unfortunately, will accept no compromise, and leaves his marks, his crow's feet, and his wrinkles upon us whether we will or no. Depend upon it, I would have remained young had my own inclinations been consulted. But you—well, you have not aged much; you are still as handsome as ever," with a low bow, that, so far from pleasing her, only made her brow contract in a frown.

"You did not come here to tell me that, I take it," she said, with some severity; "or, if so, you have need altered strangely from the man I knew years ago. I presume your most unexpected visit has some object, and it will be better a very way that you should let me know at once what that object is."

"Business-like as ever!" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "My dear Alison, you ought to have been a man—as I have told you many times; your brain and capabilities are the very reverse of feminine! But really, I cannot flatter myself on a very hospitable welcome; you don't appear particularly glad to see me."

"I am not," she rejoined, with quiet composure; "and, between you and me, there is no necessity for sacrificing candour to politeness."

"Well, no, perhaps you are right; at any rate, I will imitate your frankness if you will first of all allow me to repair the damages the fatigues of a long journey has wrought." He went to a splitt case standing on a side table, and poured out a glass of brandy, which he drank undiluted. "Now I will tell you what brought me hither. Some week or two ago, I chanced to hear that you had inherited a very large fortune from an uncle who had struck oil in America, or found gold in Australia, or dug out diamonds at the Cape, who, to cut the matter short, had been lucky enough to hit on one of those royal roads to success that I, personally, have tried for a long while to find, and not yet succeeded. Well, I thought perhaps it might be to my benefit to institute inquiries concerning how the will was

made, and so I took the trouble of going to Doctors' Commons and procuring a copy, which I have at the present moment in my pocket."

He paused; but Mrs. Foley, sitting opposite, and watching him with close attention from under her downcast eyes, made no remark, so he went on.

"I find this testator, by name John Godwin, left all the large fortune of which he died possessed to his elder niece and god-daughter, Alix, and after her death, to her child or children."

"Yes," interrupted Mrs. Foley, locking her fingers together and looking her visitor straight in the face; "and Alix being dead, and her child being dead also, the whole of the money came to me, and will go to my daughter after me. You see, although my uncle named my sister's child as his heiress, in case of the mother's death, he made no provision for my sister's husband."

"Like an iniquitous old scamp, as he must have been! Excuse my candour," remarked Mr. Paul Chevassé. "I hold that will was very hard lines on me, but of course I can't dispute it after this lapse of time. You must have thought Providence had taken you under its especial protection by removing my wife and daughter, and thus constituting you sole heiress of such a magnificent fortune." He added with a sneer that she saw fit to ignore. "Suppose Evelyn had lived?"

"In that case she would have had the money instead of me," was the quiet response; "but I really don't see the necessity of going into a discussion of what might have been—it is a question to which there would be no end."

"Wait a minute—if you please—I have a motive for desiring to recall the circumstances of your niece's death. You will remember that she and I and her mother were staying in a little out-of-the-way place in Jersey, and that I took the child Evelyn with me when I went yachting with a party of friends. Well, unfortunately, when we were off the coast of France a storm came on, and the vessel foundered, with the result of all the party being drowned save myself. I was a powerful swimmer, and contrived to keep myself afloat until a passing steamer saw me and picked me up. Now, what would you say if I told you that Evelyn also was rescued—that an old fisherman, who was out in his boat some little time after our vessel had sunk, found her tied to a raft, and took her home to a little lonely hut where he and his wife lived?"

"I should say," she replied, the words falling slowly from her white lips, "that you were inventing some absurd story that you had borrowed from a romance."

"But truth, you know, is so often stranger than fiction," he interpolated, shrugging his shoulders.

"If," she continued, without noticing the interruption, "such a thing had taken place people would naturally inquire why you did not make it known as soon as you discovered it."

"Of course they would, and no doubt they would employ a few unflattering epithets with regard to my conduct, when they heard the reason," he said, nonchalantly. "You who are better acquainted with me, and who don't expect too much from poor human nature, won't be so severe in your judgment, perhaps."

"At that time I was, as you are aware, greatly pressed for money; in fact, I did not know which way to turn for the want of it. Evelyn had a fortune of ten thousand pounds left her by her maternal grandfather, and settled upon herself in such a manner that she could not touch a farthing of it until she came of age, but in case of her dying a minor, it lapsed unconditionally to her mother, which was tantamount to saying I should derive the benefit of it."

"Well, it was not until some months afterwards that I happened to hear, through a French newspaper, of a little child being picked up off the coast of Brittany, and on going to make inquiries, found that it was in reality Evelyn, who, however, had had an attack of fever, con-

sequent on her exposure, and was only just recovering from it."

"Now it struck me, that supposing it became known she was alive, I should be placed in an extremely awkward position by her trustees, who would insist on my refunding the ten thousand pounds, part of which I had already spent."

"Well, I hit on a plan of compromising matters. I took her away from the old fisherman, and placed her in a convent in Normandy under a false name, and I paid down a sum of money in advance; no questions were asked, and so she remained there until she was grown up. What have you to say now, Mrs. Foley?"

Just at first she said nothing, but remained looking at him with her glittering eyes, which seemed larger and brighter than ever, contrasted with the extreme pallor of her face. Then,—

"Do you expect me to believe this?" she asked at length, wetting her parched lips before she spoke.

"It really doesn't matter much whether you believe it or not; it is the truth, and can be proved," he rejoined coolly. "I can quite well understand your not wishing to admit a fact which will deprive you of your large heritage, but unfortunately for us we must bow to disagreeable circumstances when we can't control them."

She was silent again, her logical mind—which he had correctly said was more masculine than feminine—grasping the situation, and deciding on what would be her best course of action.

She had one thing in her favour—she knew the character of the man she had to deal with, and she saw that the same reason which had prevented his declaring the fact of Evelyn's existence in the past would still render it advantageous to him to keep it secret now. Yes, he was playing a bold game, but she held the trump card in her own hand.

"Well," she said, at length, and it struck him that she did not attempt any denial of her niece being alive, "what do you intend doing?"

"Is there anything to prevent my claiming the money on Evelyn's behalf?" he asked, responding to her question by another.

"Yes, a great many things. In the first place you have motives for not wishing your name brought prominently before the public; secondly, you could not very well explain the fact of keeping Evelyn hidden away and appropriating her money without running the risk of a criminal prosecution; thirdly, and lastly,—she fixed her eyes on him with a keenness of penetration before which a less hardened man might have quailed—"I believe you have another plan which you fancy will have a more advantageous result as regards your own interests."

"Bravo!" he exclaimed, striking his hands together in soft applause; "I admire a clever woman, even when her talent is likely to be employed against me—how much more when I can count on it as an ally! I will be quite plain with you, Alison, because I perceive that beating about the bush is only waste of time so far as you are concerned."

"The reasons you assign for my not putting in a claim on Evelyn's behalf are perfectly legitimate ones; and, besides this, she is rather a wilful and headstrong young lady, and her ideas of what she ought to give me out of her fortune might not coincide with mine. Under these circumstances, I am willing to come to an arrangement with you by which we may both benefit."

"Evelyn at present knows nothing of her family—does not even know her own name, and therefore is not likely to find out she is an heiress, so that I have no conscientious scruples in disposing of a fortune she never in reality possessed. I would suggest that you should give me a certain sum of money—say twenty thousand pounds—and for that consideration I will undertake to hold my tongue."

She did not seem surprised or draw back from the cold-blooded villainy of the proposal; perhaps, knowing her visitor as she did, she was in a measure prepared for it. After a few minutes' meditation, she said, abruptly,—

"Where is Evelyn at the present moment?"



"CAN YOU UNDO THE GATE?" LASCALLE'S WIFE EXCLAIMED IN TONES THAT HARDLY ROSE ABOVE A WHISPER.

"In Paris, at my home," he answered, readily. "I see your imagination is as inventive as ever; in other words, you tell a lie with a grace that makes it easily pass for truth," she remarked, her lips curling in a disdainful smile. "As it happens, however, I am better informed than you suppose, and may tell you that for some weeks I have been aware my niece was living at Lyngard Court under the name of Maraquita Leigh."

He started violently, evidently much surprised at hearing such a statement from her lips.

"How do you know that?"

"Because she came here one evening, and I was immediately struck by her likeness to my family. She remained the night, and I made my suspicions certain by examining a birthmark she has on her shoulder."

"Did she see you examining it?" he inquired anxiously.

Mrs. Foley smiled with some scorn.

"Certainly not. Before she went to bed I gave her a narcotic in some wine, and effected my purpose while she slept."

"You are a clever woman!" he exclaimed, in an admiration that seemed purely involuntary.

"You see I had the advantage of knowing you so well that I was prepared for any ruse or villainy on your part, by which money might be made," she responded, unmoved by the compliment.

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"You don't trouble to wrap the home truths you utter in silver paper, madame; however, that makes no difference to our present business. Do you agree to the offer I have made you?"

"Yes, in a modified form. But first of all, tell me—and speak the truth if you can—whether, when you came here, you knew of Evelyn's presence at Lyngard Court?"

"Candidly, I did not. She ran away from me

in Paris, and since then I haven't been able to trace her. As I said before, I heard of this will of your uncle's, and also that you had lately bought a large estate close to that of Sir Piers Lyngard, where you were living, and so, trusting to the change in my appearance for not being recognised, I came. On my way from the station to the village it chanced that I saw Maraquita—or Evelyn as she should by rights be called—and with no less a person than Sir Piers himself, and I followed them at a safe distance, to the Court, where I managed to convey a note to her and make an appointment for to-night."

"That is well; now I will tell you the terms I am willing to make with you. I will consent to give you an allowance of a thousand a year so long as I remain mistress of my uncle's property, and—"

"One thousand pounds!" he repeated, with angry vehemence. "When you have an income of nearly twenty times that amount!"

"That has nothing to do with you," she said, quietly, and totally unmoved by his excitement.

"If I understand rightly all you have to consider is in what way you can drive the best bargain for yourself; and, as a matter of fact, so far from being in a position to dictate terms, you are in reality forced to accept whatever I may think fit to offer."

"Indeed, if I liked, I could defy you, for you dare not make public the story of Evelyn's rescue. However, as you are my sister's husband, I am willing to make you this allowance, which shall be continued as long as you live. Spare me a discussion," she added, imperatively, waving her hand to enjoin silence as he was about speaking.

"Nothing you can say will make any difference either to my ideas or my actions. You can accept my terms or leave them, which you like. The only stipulation I have to make is that you should quit England at once—to-night, in fact, and take Evelyn with you, and that she should remain abroad, or wherever you happen to be

where there is no likelihood of my seeing her."

"For this purpose, and to defray your travelling expenses, I will write you out a cheque for five hundred pounds, which you may consider as a gift, independent of your future allowance."

She spoke in quiet, business-like tones, as if she were arranging the renewal of a lease or the sale of some land, instead of settling a question which was, in effect, of vital importance to her; and as she concluded she met his eyes and breathed a sigh of unconscious relief, for she saw she had conquered—he would accept what she offered without demur.

(To be continued.)

It is a comparatively new idea to put up tombstones and monuments of glass, instead of marble or granite, but it is a practical one and likely to meet with great encouragement from those who desire these memorials to be lasting. Glass resists the elements and is to all intents and purposes indestructible. Stone of all sorts crumbles and disintegrates under the action of the elements. But glass remains and will endure for centuries. It is, therefore, proposed that all memorial tablets, monuments and headstones be made of glass. Any colour may be selected, pure white, of course, having the choice. Lettering may be put on in any style, and any device or pattern may be used. It has long been understood that for marine purposes thick plate glass is the only practical and appropriate material, resisting storms and seas as no other substance can.

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "DOCTOR" (purely vegetable), 2/6, from Chemists, 1/6, post free from Dr. HORN, "Glendower," Bourne-mouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.



IN A SECOND CAPTAIN DACRES WAS OFF HIS HORSE AND HAD THE GREAT LUNCHING MISCREANT BY THE THROAT.

THE BROWN LADY.

—301—

CHAPTER XV.

A GREAT surprise awaited Mr. Holroyd's visitors next day when they entered the library—his own sanctum—that is to say. They discovered, to their astonishment, the long-banished, full-length picture of his daughter hanging over the chimney-piece! He had had it carried up, cleaned, and hung in this place of honour, partly to ease—indeed, chiefly to ease—his own conscience, and partly to satisfy his curiously outspoken and not to be overawed young companion.

Very little was said about this proceeding, but a good deal was thought, you may be sure. Mr. Isaac expressed his surprise and delight in fitting terms, and then foolishly asked the reason of this translation from the lumber-room!

"My wish!" was the brief reply, and it was made in such a tone of voice, that he prudently dropped the subject.

A visit from Squire Dacres was the event of the day. He came at long intervals to see his old blind neighbour. He had not seen him now for ten years, and found him greatly aged, bent, and altered. The Squire had a great deal to say, and some questions to ask. He was rather curious about the pretty girl who occupied the Holroyds' pew.

"Any relative of yours?" he asked, inquisitively.

"No! Why?"

"Because she is a Holroyd all over!"

"Stuff!" exclaimed the old man, ferociously.

"She's an uncommonly pretty girl—too pretty. One would think you had your eyesight when you chose her, eh! All the women are down on her; but I say, what is it to them if she has no character. It's not as if she was in a ladies' school!"

"Who says she has no character?" asked Mr. Holroyd, firing up.

"Why, everyone. Miss Cotton, for one!"

"I'll back Miss May's against hers any day. My relation, Lady Carlton, will vouch for her respectability. If half the girls in the country were as well behaved it would be a good thing for them. No character, indeed!"

"Well! no references; perhaps that's it," said the Squire, apologetically.

"Aye, may be! She was only in one place before. She's a good, quiet, clever girl, fit to associate with the best, and if I hear a word against her from anyone I'll—I'll knock his head off"; and Mr. Holroyd hammered his stick angrily on the ground.

"Oh! well; if Lady Carlton is her social god-mother she's all right," said Squire Dacres, still more apologetically, "there's not a word to be said. I have taken a great fancy to her appearance myself. She looks a nice, innocent girl, and as if she had good blood in her veins. She's uncommonly like someone—"

"Like who?"

"I can't tell you!" he answered, rather brusquely. "Don't let Gordon make a fool of her, that's all I say."

"She's much more likely to make a fool of him," said the old man, with decision.

"No, no! Impossible. Gordon is a knave, not a fool!"

"You never liked him," exclaimed Mr. Holroyd, irritably.

"Never! It was against my will, as you know, that he married Elizabeth; but she would have her own way, like most women, and a nice hash she made of her life, poor girl! Gordon was not a good husband, I'm sure of that!"

"He never ill-treated her," interrupted his uncle.

"No! but I believe he neglected her. I don't say she hadn't a temper; but—"

"But you must allow, John Dacres, that of late she was very queer—in fact, quite strange in her mind."

"If she made a bad bargain, so did he. A man does not like a half-witted wife, draggle-tailed and indolent, and helpless, moping and

mewing beside him all day. These may seem hard words to a father, but they are the truth."

"Well, we won't quarrel over the dead. You keep your opinion, and I keep mine. Although I don't like Gordon—and I believe he is selfish, extravagant, and I won't say what else—my wife has taken a fancy to him, and has told me to ask him and his father over to our Christmas-tree and *tableaux vivants* next Thursday; and as you say, Miss May is a *protégée* of Lady Carlton's, I ask her, too, on my own account. She hasn't much amusement here."

"No! and she may go for once; but she must have a card of invitation, and everything in proper form. Mind that, and that she is not to get the habit of going out."

"Oh! I'll mind; and now good-bye. I'll not be so long in coming to see you again, and I'll look in soon, and have another talk over old times."

And with this announcement, which was received by a grunt, Squire Dacres departed.

By what means Squire Dacres procured his wife's signature to an invitation card for Miss May will never be known; but there it was in due form.

And having Mr. Holroyd's permission to go, she hurried off to Miss Gaspard, her only village friend, to consult her about her dress, and to ask permission to join her, and to go under her wing to this great festivity, for to expect to accompany Mr. Isaac and his son would be scoring too high altogether.

"Of course you can come with us!" said Miss Gaspard, good-naturedly, "and there is a girl in the village that makes very well, and will turn you out a very decent dress if you give her the material."

The material was to be black—black lace, or black net—and made as plain as possible; in short, as befitted a girl in Linda May's position.

Linda dressed herself with some trepidation on the eventful evening. She was wearing an evening dress for the first time, and going into company also for the first time. She had a

tremulous feeling that she would be a goose among swans!

What right had she—an unknown, nameless orphan—to herd with the best families in Kent?

On the other hand, she had a conviction that she was as good as any of them. It seemed too wild an idea to breathe into anyone's ear that she believed herself to be Arabella Holroyd's daughter.

Where were her proofs? people would say. Well, there was her face, that was one proof; her age exactly tallied with the age of Arabella's infant. She had a queer little mole on her shoulder, that now she came to examine it might be taken for a crescent in shape, though she had never noticed the resemblance before.

Mr. Isaac's agitation, too, was strange. Why did he look as if he had seen a ghost when he first beheld her? Why did he cross-examine her so closely? Why did his hand tremble, and why was his face averted?

Strong proof as these were to her, they would be laughed at by a cool-brained outsider who had no interest in the issue, nor an intensely sanguine disposition like her own. She gazed at herself in the glass rather discontentedly. Her dress was so very, very plain; she had no ornaments save a row of ancient coral beads round her neck—a row of red beads, from which depended a little, fat, red coral heart.

She had found it in Miss Mee's workbox, and it had not struck her as being worth pawnning in those gloomy, miserable days of last year. Now it gave a bit of colour to her sombre dress—that and a bouquet of red carnations that Nan's sweet-heart had arranged and provided at Nan's bidding.

Linda said to herself that "she did not look so very bad, after all, and no one would notice her. She was going to see, not to be seen;" and throwing her sealskin coat round her she hurried away, as the fly which was to take her to Miss Gaspard's had long been waiting humbly at a side door.

Linda, who now knew her way almost blind-fold about the narrow, old passages and sudden stairs and sharp corners, hurried briskly along, candle in hand. As she came to one abrupt angle in a passage a great black cat—a monster, it seemed to her, with bright, yellow eyes—came bounding towards her; and as she rounded the sharp corner, almost running, she came face to face with a figure—a black-hooded figure. More she could not see, for her candle was instantaneously blown out—yes, blown out.

Frightened out of her wits, with a stifled shriek she rushed past this mysterious and horrible thing, and fled down the passage faster than she had ever run in her life; and it seemed to her that a voice called after her: "Arabella! Arabella!" but this might have been imagination, for the noise of her own footsteps and the drum-like beating of her own heart were, it seemed to her, loud enough to drown a whole battery of artillery.

What joy! what relief! to turn another corner and come into the full blaze of the lamps that lit up the corridor, which was in the new part of the house—the corridor and grand staircase.

Flying breathlessly down this staircase she came upon the two gentlemen in the hall below, gloved and top-coated, and ready for departure.

"What on earth has happened to you, Miss May!" ejaculated Gordon Holroyd, removing his cigarette. "Is there a mad dog after you, or a ghost, or what?"

"I thought I saw something!" she panted out in jerks; "something that blew my light out!"

"A gust of wind!" said Mr. Isaac, with a contemptuous smile. "The old part of this house has enough draughts in it to turn a wind-mill!"

"But I really am sure I saw something!" persisted the girl, who looked ghastly pale, and was shaking like a leaf.

"What sort of thing?"

"It was dark, and had no particular shape. It was just close to me, though I could not feel it."

"Pooh! my dear Miss May! Dark—shapeless—close to you and you could not feel it! We all know what you saw, and what you

have been running away from like one distracted!"

"What?" she asked, tremulously.

"Why, your own shadow. A draught of wind, and your own shadow!"

It might be so, she acknowledged to herself, but the cat was no shadow, and no such animal was in the house to her knowledge.

Moreover, it was no shadow that had sat at the foot of the bed and warned her, and dragged the clothes away from her shrinking face and trembling fingers.

However, this was no time to stand discussing the matter; she was late already. She felt half inclined not to go, her nerves were so shattered; but better go and get the horrible idea dispelled from her mind by Annie Gaspard's chatter, and by new and gay surroundings.

Mr. Holroyd had dismissed her for the evening, and her only alternative would be to return to her own lonely, isolated room; and from the thought of that and of the intervening, vault-like passages, her mind instinctively recoiled.

Dacres Court was a blaze of light, and torches burnt all the way along on both sides of the avenue, as Dr. and Miss Gaspard and their companion for the time shambled up to the portico in the village fly.

The steps were covered with crimson cloth, and up these steps numbers of well-dressed people were ascending—women with diamonds in their hair, and men with handles to their names.

Linda felt her own insignificance as she stood in a corner of the cloak-room, and watched various splendid dames and their daughters shaking out their tulle or satin skirts, and giving their hair a last pat or touch before the cheval glass.

Miss Gaspard had acquaintances, but she had none, this plainly-dressed girl in black; and no one looked at her, and no one spoke to her, till suddenly an old lady, in a blue velvet dress and a blazing diamond necklace, and with a very beaky nose, said, rather sharply,—

"Ah! Here, take my cloak, will you?" throwing a plush and ermine mantle into her astonished arms.

Linda took it submissively.

"Don't stand there staring at me!" continued the old lady, authoritatively; "but be quick and give me a ticket!"

Linda coloured crimson, and there was a sort of suppressed titter among the other ladies.

Lady MacOstrich had made a mistake. She had taken Linda for one of the attendants, one of whom now advanced with a broad grin, and relieved Linda of the cloak.

The old lady's apology was not a nice one, putting up her place-net, and surveying Linda superciliously. She coldly remarked,—

"Ah! I beg pardon. I took you for one of the housemaids! Pray excuse my mistake!" And, with a compromise between a bow and a toss of the head, Lady MacOstrich sailed out of the room.

This was a bad beginning, and the continuation was not much better. Mrs. Dacres, who stood at the entrance of a large room where the Christmas-tree was being displayed, shook hands condescendingly with Miss Gaspard, but gave Linda such a look, and such a bow, that the unfortunate girl wished herself back at Carristock.

The room was full of noise and bustle, and gay voices, and in the crowd she felt comparatively at ease.

Annie Gaspard had drifted away. She was alone, no one knew her, no one looked at her, and she could gaze her fill at everyone and everything.

There was Mr. Dacres following in the Duchess of Dublin, a stout, merry-faced old lady. There was Miss Cotton, in a pale-yellow satin and tulle, looped up with poppies, wearing a brilliant reviere round her neck, and talking and laughing to half-a-dozen appreciative men, including Gordon Holroyd, who appeared to be roused to unusual animation, and laughed and applauded her speeches quite uproariously; but lookers-on see most of the game, and Linda noticed that these speeches were made at Captain Dacres, who stood close by, silent and self-possessed, with a pair of scissors in his hand, prepared to begin

operations, at a given signal, on the Christmas tree.

Presently all the company were seated, and gifts were being handed to those whose names were called out—trifles, pretty, expensive—trifles that would make a considerable hole in Squire Dacres' purse.

Linda watched the proceedings with interest—watched cigar cases, silver bottles, workbaskets, jewel caskets, bangles, brooches, and jewelled pins being handed about and admired, or raved over all round her.

Of course there was nothing for her. She never expected anything; but she was glad to see Annie Gaspard presented with a pretty present.

Somewhat to her surprise the Squire found her out, and squeezed himself into a seat beside her, and nodding at her affably,—

"Well, Miss May!" he said, in his hearty voice, "how are you getting on? and what have you got? By Jove!" he ejaculated, and he drew in his breath, and stared at her in unmitigated surprise. "I say, did Mr. Holroyd give you that?" pointing his finger at her tramping ornament—the coral necklace.

"No!" she answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Because it belonged to her daughter who is dead. That was Arabella's coral necklace!"

"How do you know?" gasped his listener.

"How do I know? For an excellent reason. I remember it being bought and given to her when she (was quite) a little chit by her god-mother—my first wife!"

Linda said nothing, but her heart beat very fast. This coral necklace was another proof—another link in the chain—and that a very strong one.

"May I ask how it came into your possession?" he continued, rather suspiciously, propping his elbow as he spoke, and regarding her gravely.

"Yes, certainly; and I will tell you!" she answered, with sparkling eyes. "I do not know who my parents were. I was brought up in the country by an old Miss Mee, who said that I was no relation to her. She promised to tell me all about myself, but before she could keep her promise she died."

"Well, and then—?"

"Then her brother came from Liverpool, took all her property but her clothes, and a few books and things that were of no value. Among these things was a little, red leather work-box, very old-fashioned, and in it I found a hair ring and this necklace."

"May I see the ring?" leaning forward.

"Certainly!" taking it off, and tendering it.

"That was Arabella's too. See the small gold fleur-de-lis, the Holroyd crest! At one time, twenty years ago, we were very intimate with them. They were more like relations than neighbours. Old Mr. Holroyd and my first wife were bosom friends. Latterly there has been a coolness. My daughter, who married Gordon Holroyd, was not a happy wife; but she is dead, and there is no use in keeping up enmity. I like old Holroyd for the sake of old associations; but, candidly, I can't stand Isaac. I've always thought Isaac played a deep part about Arabella. Do you know that you are very like her!"

The girl had grown pale again by this time, and a half-startled, half-pained look was in her eyes. Before she could speak he said,—

"Now I must go. I see Mr. Dacres beckoning, but I'll send some one to take my place," and rising as he spoke he hurried away.

"Rupert!" he said, buttonholing his son. "I want you to do something. I have a protégée here. I want you to be good to Mr. Holroyd's reader; she's quite a stranger here—knows nobody."

In a very short time, Captain Dacres occupied his father's place. He glanced at the girl to whom he had just been introduced. She was looking straight before her; her features were delicate in outline, and almost faultlessly regular in their proportions, and her eyes were fixed abstractedly on the curtain that hung before the stage, on which the *tableaux vivants* were to be produced.

Rupert Dacres was not accustomed to be

ignored and treated with indifference. He hazarded some remark about the heat of the room; she replied only by a monosyllable. Rupert began to get angry.

"Won't talk, whether she can or not; but I shall make her speak! A penny for your thoughts, Miss May!"

She gave a little start, and said,—

"I could not sell them; they are too precious. Your father has been telling me something that has put very strange ideas into my head."

"Telling you about what, if I may presume to inquire?"

"About this!" laying her fingers on her necklace.

Rupert stared in amazement.

"Perhaps," she added, quickly, "you will know more about it some day. I believe this coral necklace is a link in my life."

At this moment the curtain drew up on the first tableau, and there was silence.

It was "Queen Mary and her Court." This was followed by "The Princess in the Tower."

"Doesn't the jailor's face remind you of someone?" whispered Captain Dacres. "Of Mr. Isaac Holroyd!"

It did. For all his benevolent words and deeds, Mr. Isaac Holroyd had a cruel and malign expression.

Between the scenes Captain Dacres talked away to his companion. It was not often that he cared to exert himself, but he could talk both intelligently and agreeably when he chose to take the trouble, and he did lay himself out to entertain and befriended this pretty, neglected, and unconventional girl, who did not know a creature in the room.

And she talked to him as she had never done to mortal man in her life before; telling him of her curious girlhood—her loneliness—her struggles in London—her success in securing Mr. Holroyd's situation—her thankfulness for a shelter and a home—led on from one sentence to another by the magnetism of her companion's kind, dark eyes.

When the tableaux were over and the room was once more filled with the gentle clamour of high-bred voices, he did not quit her side, but escorted her to the supper-room, and waited on her there, to the fury and amazement of Maria Cotton, who surveyed the couple from a neighbouring table; and when she went away with the Gaspards it was Rupert Dacres himself who amused them and the two Holroyds by wrapping Miss May up in her furs, and accompanying her to the dingy fly, with as much attention and deference in his demeanour as if she had been a duchess. More so, indeed, probably; for Rupert Dacres, though courteous to all, was a lax sort of fellow, who rarely put himself out for anyone!

CHAPTER XVI.

For several days after Linda's unwonted disquiet, Mr. Holroyd was confined to his room with a return of his bronchitis, and the interviews, which his relatives so eagerly sought for, were denied them very sternly.

He would not allow anyone near him but Miss May and old Leech. In sickness she was invaluable to him, and he refused the offers of his dear brother's tender care querulously, not to say indignantly.

No one could believe with what desperate impatience the two relatives, brother and nephew, longed for an interview. Their money troubles were pressing on them sore. Grave letters arrived daily for Mr. Isaac, and at last he rushed up to London to stave off the evil moment for even a week.

A week! Much might happen in that time. His dear elder brother was most seriously ill, delightfully ill. Before a week was over he himself might be master of Carriabrooke.

The evening before he took his departure, he and his son Gordon, who had been following the fox (and Miss Cotton), came into the library together in that dim, idle hour which precedes dressing and dinner.

Gordon threw himself back into an easy chair, and stretched his muddy top-boots and leathers towards the blazing logs, whilst his father sat opposite, nursing one leg on another, and watching the flames with great intentness.

There was no light in the apartment beyond that given by the blazing logs, and the two men seemed to be blissfully unconscious that they were not alone.

Miss May was standing in a corner, behind a big screen, carefully groping for a book. She had no desire to keep herself concealed, and she was busily fingering the backs of some volumes, when she was startled by hearing Gordon say,—

"My old father-in-law was talking to me to-day about Miss May. He has got the girl on the brain. Nothing will do him but that she is Arabella Holroyd's daughter. He says her face, and manner, and voice are Arabella's over again; that she has ornaments that belonged to her; that her age tallies exactly with that of Arabella's daughter; and, to make a long story short, he is going to place the whole matter before her grandfather, and get him to put her case in the hands of detectives!"

"What business is it of his?" said Mr. Isaac, in a biting tone.

"None. But he has a knack of meddling in other people's affairs; and is as dogged in sticking to what he once takes into his head as my bulldog Billy!"

"He must never carry out his meddling here! He must never get your uncle's ear, much less put detectives on the track; for if he does we are lost! Bear that in mind, Gordon."

"What do you mean! You don't really mean that there's anything to be feared from him!"

"Everything! The girl is your cousin. Don't you see the likeness between her and the picture of her mother? It's like fate—her being in this house quite by accident! But the old man must never know who she is, nor shall she! If she was acknowledged heiress you and I would be beggars, Gordon; remember that!"

Gordon groaned aloud, and then said,—

"I'm a beggar as it is. If the old man don't go off soon I'll be completely up a gum tree!"

"The doctor to-day said he was in a very critical state," said his affectionate brother, cheerfully. "His breathing is affected. I don't think he can last long; the weather is against him."

"How much is he worth?" said Gordon, more hopefully.

"There have been great savings the last eighteen years," said Mr. Isaac, rubbing his hands. "I should not wonder if he had put by a couple of hundred thousand pounds; and the rental alone is nine thousand per annum, or more. Yes, your uncle would cut up well!"

"Two hundred thousand pounds!" echoed the other. "There's a good deal of spending in that!"

"There is; and I've promised you halves, Gordon; but if you gamble, and make the money fly, as is your habit, you'll be as bad off as ever in a twelvemonth!"

"Once I can get out of this scrape, and into smooth water, I'll promise never to put my head into such a noose again. I'll reform. I'll settle down as a respectable domestic character, and I'll marry Maria Cotton!"

"If she will have you. She'd rather have Dacres's little finger than your whole body!" replied his parent, frankly.

"And Dacres doesn't care a straw for her. He seemed rather smitten with Miss May, I thought—eh?"

"There's the first gong!" said his father, riling. "Smitten with Miss May! The man is not such a fool!"

And, so saying, he walked out of the room, followed by his hopeful offspring.

Linda's heart was beating fast. She had never played the part of eavesdropper before, and she felt both frightened and ashamed, as, leaving her hiding-place and the book she had come to seek, she stole towards the fire, and stood before it, looking dreamily into the red embers.

No need for her to hurry. She did not dine with the two guests that day.

And so she really was Arabella's daughter, Mr.

Holroyd's heiress; and her name was not Linda May, but Linda Delafosse.

How was she to prove this? Her Uncle Isaac would give her no assistance; for to acknowledge her claims would, as he said, leave him a beggar.

As the girl stood thus, with her head bent and her hands clasped, and her pretty girlish figure thrown out into strong relief against the fire-light, she was aroused from her meditations by hearing a heavy sigh in her neighbourhood, and, turning quickly round, she beheld a figure sitting in Gordon Holroyd's chair—the figure of a woman with piercing black eyes. She was dressed in brown; it was "the Brown Lady" again.

Linda had hardly time to distinguish her, for she only gave her one brief glance of horror and amazement; but she noticed that the apparition wore a shawl over its head, and with the same shawl concealed the lower part of its face, in fact, all but the eyes, which had been fixed upon herself with a gaze that a basilisk might have envied.

As Linda took all this in, with a lightning look, she gave a half-stifled shriek, and fled out of the room. Her heart beat so fast that it almost choked her, and more for company than anything else she ran up to Mr. Holroyd's room and entered very softly, for she had left him asleep.

But he was not asleep now, for he asked, in an audible peevish tone,—

"What's the matter, May? Why are you panting like a hunted hare?"

"Because I've been running, sir," she answered, coming over to the bedside as she spoke. "Because I have been frightened."

"By what? A rat?"

"By a figure sitting in the library, a woman with a shawl or a hand over her head, and holding a piece of it before her face."

"The Lady in Brown," he said. "Well, she will do you no harm."

"She nearly frightens me to death, and only for one reason I would not stay another night in the house."

"Holy toby! that's very fine talking. And pray, what is the reason?"

"It's a secret, sir, that I will only share with you, and you must promise to keep it," said the girl, boldly resolved to make the plunge now and get it over.

"Must! I don't like that word. Who does this secret concern, May?"

"You and me—only you and me."

"Well, out with it!"

"You must prepare for a surprise, sir, a great surprise," she said, trying to steady her shaking voice. "I have reason to know that your daughter's child is still alive."

"No—no—no!" he exclaimed, grasping the bedclothes tightly, like a man in pain.

"Yes," she went on, with pale lips and a low, hurried voice, "and that I am she."

"No—Impossible!" said the old man, violently.

"I beseech you to listen to me for a few moments with patience," said the girl, kneeling down suddenly, and taking his hand. "I am said by all who knew her to be the living image of your daughter. My age tallies with the age of her child. I know no parents. I was brought up in obscurity purposely, and among the scanty possessions left to me by my guardian are two articles that belonged to your daughter—a necklace of coral and a little ring. They were both recognised by Squire Dacres."

"Anything more?" said the old man, hoarsely.

"Where are your proofs?"

"Some were destroyed; but some are in your brother's keeping. His agitation when he first saw me, and his anxious questionings awakened my suspicions, and an hour ago I was in the library searching for a book you wished me to read to you—a book on poisons—and Mr. Holroyd and his son came in and talked in the dark, not knowing that I was present."

"And you listened?"

"Yes, I could not help it. They were talking about me. Your nephew said that Squire Dacres was coming to speak to you about me, and suggest that you would place the matter in the

hands of detectives, and thus trace out my history. There were no particulars of your grandchild's death—no certificate!"

"But all this is raving and nonsense. Have you done?"

"No," she went on, rather tremulously. "I heard Mr. Isaac Holroyd say that I was your granddaughter, that he was aware of the fact, but that you or I should never know it, for it you did he would be a beggar."

"And what else did he say?"

"I would rather not tell you. That is all they said of me."

"Girl, if you are my granddaughter, obey me!" said the old man, solemnly.

"They said—they said that you were very rich. They said that you could not live long. They speculated on—on your death."

"Oh, they did that, did they? Ring the bell for Leech."

"Leech," he said, as that ancient servitor came into the room, "do you see Miss May there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Be eyes for me for once. Look at her, and tell me if she is like anyone you ever saw! Tell the truth."

Leech hesitated for a moment, and then said,—

"No offence, sir, but I can only see what all the world sees. She's the born copy of Miss Arabella. When I first saw her coming in at the hall door you might have knocked me down with a straw."

"Come nearer, child," said the old man, "and let me pass my hand over your face."

"Yes," he said. "Yes, Arabella's features. If you are her daughter, Heaven has sent you to me in my old age and infirmity, and has been good to me beyond what I deserve. You shall bring your poor little proofs, your necklace and ring, and to-morrow we shall put the police on the trace. You have an address in my desk—the address on the letter—Margery-terrace, Hammermill, was it? and from that they can work the clue; but it's twenty years ago—twenty years ago—and before I accept all you say I must have some talk with my brother. If he is innocent of this charge you are cast out, you'll understand that. There are two sides to every story."

"Yes. But you promised to keep my secret. Surely you can ask questions without betraying me?"

"Yes, I can do that. I scarcely believe that my own only brother would have made away with—kidnapped and concealed—my granddaughter, in order to succeed to the estate himself. Such villainy is only known upon the stage! Go down, now, and send him up to me alone."

Mr. Isaac Holroyd received the invitation to visit his brother with great pleasure, and followed Leech to the sick room with joyful alacrity. He could judge the patient's chances for himself for one thing, and he would endeavour to borrow money for another.

His brother was wonderfully better; his breathing was no longer oppressed; his voice was clear and sharp as he said,—

"Well, Isaac, I hear you are going to town to-morrow, and I thought it would be no harm to have a talk with you."

"No harm—no harm at all!" said Isaac, sitting down and rubbing his long, thin hands.

"Lying here, thinking of my latter end, and all my sins, my mind goes greatly to Arabella. Are you quite certain, Isaac, that there was no mistake about the child—the orphan—that it did die?"

"No—no mistake, I am sorry to say!"

"Then it did die! You are sure of that?"

"I'll swear it did! What makes you go back to such strange suspicions now?"

"Dreams, Isaac—dreams. I often reproach myself that there was so little interest taken about the baby. It was my heiress; it ought to have been brought down and buried here. Where was it interred?"

"Oh! I'm sure I can't recollect at this moment."

"But you will recall the place to your mind, won't you?"

"Yes, yes!—only give me time."

"I mean to put a stone up. And you will get the burial certificate and certificate of death in due form. You might manage that when you are in town to-morrow for a few days, will you?"

"Certainly. I'll do everything—everything in my power," faltered Isaac, in a low, constrained sort of voice. "And there is something I want you to do for me—a favour," he added. "In short, my money is locked up in so many enterprises that I am greatly—greatly hampered for some floating cash—some ready capital. As I am situated, my hands are tied. There have been heavy failures too, and we have been hard hit; in short, what would be no inconvenience to you, and—of course, I'd give you ample security—would be a tremendous boon to me."

"I always thought you were a wealthy man, Isaac," said his brother, coldly. "You had your own fortune, and your wife was rich."

"I am—I am; but my capital, as I tell you, is locked up in many things that yield little interest. A certain sum of ready money would treble itself in three years' time in my hands."

"And that sum?"

"Well, business is business. I could not do with less than fifteen thousand; and I'd guarantee five per cent.—that's understood."

"Yes," said the blind man, sharply; "and it's also understood that I won't lend you a penny—not a penny! Sell out the funds, indeed, to bolster up your rotten business! No, no! I may be a blind man, but I am not a fool!"

"No. But I am your next heir, and inherit all you possess. It would make little difference to you to give me the part of that inheritance now; there would be no folly in such an act, nothing but pure brotherly kindness!" said Mr. Isaac, in his most unctuous voice.

"Well, it's an act that I am not going to commit. I feel better than I have done for months. I was reared in a sensible fashion, so were you—out of bed at six every morning and into a tub of cold water. We are a hale and long-lived family. My grandfather was ninety-five when he died. Why should I not live another twenty years? And whether I do or not, be sure of one thing—that as long as I have breath in my body I'll keep my money in my own hands!"

"Oh, well; of course, you have power to do as you please with your own!" said the other, with great humility, but a deep scowl on his face. "But I think you forget that I am your kin—your only brother. You might stretch a point!"

"No I won't—and there's an end of it! Let us change the subject, and talk of something else."

(To be continued.)

In Nagasaki, Japan, there is a firework-maker who manufactures pyrotechnic birds of great size that, when exploded, sail in a life-like manner through the air, and perform many movements exactly like those of living birds. The secret of making these wonderful things has been in the possession of the eldest male child of the family of each generation for more than four hundred years.

THE NORFOLK BROADS.—A series of lantern slides has been prepared by the Great Eastern Railway Company to illustrate the peculiar beauty and interest of the district of the Norfolk Broads. The set has been arranged for three separate lectures, illustrating respectively: A trip from London to Yarmouth and back (fifty-five slides); a trip to the Norfolk Broads (fifty-five slides); and a trip on a Norfolk river (fifty-seven slides). Descriptive notes by Mr. W. R. Richmond, and conditions of loan of slides, can be obtained from the General Manager, Great Eastern Railway, Liverpool Street Station, E.C.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfuous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps, from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

THE SECRET OF THE MINE.

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CHAPTER XVII.

DENIS CONNOR gazed with astonishment as he turned over page after page of the book.

"The writing must certainly be mine," he muttered, with astonishment; "yet I do not remember to have put down any of these entries. They must have been entered the first few days I came here, it seems so very indistinct in my mind. I do not recollect ever putting down those figures. Someone must be holding notes against Pauline's father for large sums, and it will make quite a hole in what was supposed to be a vast fortune!"

The young secretary busied himself with his task, happy in his bright dreams, but little knowing how they were to end. It seemed to him that the week which Pauline had to spend in her room would never end. Daily he sent her flowers which he gathered with his own hands, together with tender messages and ardent wishes for her speedy recovery. He would never know the tears Pauline shed over them—tears so bitter that they almost cost her her very life.

The first great sorrow the girl had ever had was in losing her father, and now another, and almost as great a one, menaced her.

The choice was suddenly given her of marrying a man she abhorred, or disgracing the memory of her dead father, whom she loved better than her own soul.

For the money which Maurice Fairfax had advanced her father, she cared nothing, even though the repaying of it took everything. She thought of the great amazement, the horror that would shock the community, to hear her poor father's name connected with the murder of the miner's daughter, in whose fate she had felt so strangely interested at the time.

Even though the words were written on a slip of paper before her, in her father's well-known handwriting, Pauline could not, would not believe it. But she knew that the world would not be so charitable. It would be glad of a chance to hold his name up to scorn.

It would not think of the churches he had built, of the school-houses he had reared, of the factories down in the village which gave employment to hundreds—to say nothing of the vast mines he operated. He was a rich man and the thousands who had envied him would be glad to drag his name through the dust.

"Save me from this! I could not bear it, Pauline," he had written; and that appeal wrung the girl's heart as nothing else in the world could have done.

It seemed like a voice from the grave, calling out to her that it was her solemn duty. She could not disgrace her father, but oh! how could she marry the man she abhorred, as the price of his silence!

No wonder the poor girl's heart was torn in the conflict between love and duty.

The flowers could have told how she hid her white face in them, crying out that she could not endure it!

The wonder was that she did not go mad. Oh, if she but dared send for her lover—handsome Denis, who loved her so fondly, and tell him all! But she dare not, dearly as he loved her; his sense of honour was so great, his abhorrence of crime so marked, that he would not wed the daughter of a man who was a self-confessed murderer.

The very word made the girl reel with horror. Her very senses seemed stupefied as the reality of the terrible situation she was placed in forced itself upon her. Never in this world was a young girl called upon to fight such a terrible battle, and in the end duty conquered.

As soon as she was able to leave her bed she sent for Maurice Fairfax. She knew she must see him first. A talk with the lover who loved her so well would be rash, was the decision she made up her mind to.

She must not see Denis until her fate was decided; it would be better so. Pauline chose for this interview a morning on which she heard the young secretary had been obliged to go to a neighbouring city on business.

A broad smile overspread Fairfax's face as he received the message. He rubbed his hands together.

"I shall win her!" he cried, under his breath. "My cleverness will win me a fortune and the girl whom I adore. When I copied her father's writing so cleverly that it deceived even the daughter into believing that it was Wilfrid Stanford's, I may reasonably suppose that the books will cheat the experts who may examine them. Pauline means to accept me, or she would not send for me to tell me what a curt note might have informed me. No; I have every reason to hope that she will some day very soon be mine."

He responded to the note with alacrity. As he entered the morning-room he saw Pauline standing by the mantel.

He approached swiftly, and held out both his hands. The girl drew back from him in horror.

"Let there be no pretence of friendship between us, Mr. Fairfax," she said, in a voice that startled him with its strangeness. "Let us get directly at the subject which I have sent for you to discuss with me."

"I will try to be as cool with you as you would like to have me be. My joy at seeing you almost unmans me, in spite of my efforts at self-control."

"I have sent for you in answer to—to—the paper which I took to my room to read," she said.

His eyes glittered, but he made no remark, waiting for her to proceed. After a moment's pause she asked, piteously,—

"Is there no other way of buying your silence than by marrying you?"

"I thought we disposed of that question at our last interview."

"There is no alternative!" sobbed the girl.

"None whatever," he answered, briefly.

She covered her face with her hands and burst into a passion of tears.

"I am in your power," wailed the girl. "There seems to be no choice left me but to submit to your inhuman terms."

"I am very glad you take so sensible a view of the matter, Miss Stanford," he said, mockingly. Pauline compressed her lips, taking no note of the evident sarcasm in his voice. "It is indeed a very wise conclusion," he repeated.

"There is a condition," interposed the girl, quickly. "I promise to—to—marry you, on condition that you destroy this horrible paper here and now."

"I will hand it to you as a bridal gift on the day we are wed. Will not that suffice?"

"No!" replied the girl, with a shudder. "I shall never know an instant's peace until it is destroyed. Since it has been in my possession, I have suffered the tortures of a living death. If I slept for a moment, and anyone crossed the threshold, the terror was so great lest he might discover the paper, that I would arise from my couch, and hide it first in one place and then in another. The remembrance of it was like a spectre standing over me, waking or sleeping."

"I shall be only too willing to meet your wishes in any way I can after you have given me your promise," he said.

The girl's face grew as white as death as she listened.

"Is your answer 'yes' or 'no,' Pauline?" he said.

"To save my father's name, I will marry you," she answered, trembling like a leaf, her hands locked tightly together.

"I know if you give me your solemn word, you will not dare break it," he said, looking at her steadily.

"No Stanford ever broke a vow which he had made," returned the girl, creasing her head proudly.

"I know why you hesitated," he said, his brows darkening. "You love Denis Connor!"

The very sound of the name of the man she loved, from the lips of Fairfax, seemed to shock her to the depths of her heart.

"He is not worth a thought from you," went on Fairfax. "It is not quite the correct thing to make love to an heiress, and then meet another girl down in the city on the sly."

"I do not believe Mr. Connor would be capable of such a thing, Mr. Fairfax."

"Then I should like to prove it to you," he cried, quickly. "He has gone this very day to meet a beautiful young girl."

"Again I say to you that it is false."

"I—I have proof of it in my pocket," drawing forth a note written in a girlish hand. "I found this in the corridor," he said. "On opening it to learn to whom it belonged, I unwittingly stumbled across a secret. Would you like to have me read its contents to you?"

"Yes," she answered in a voice that sounded like nothing human.

"You can follow me as I proceed, if you like."

There were not many lines, and they read as follows,—

"DEAREST DENIS,

"You will be surprised to receive this and to learn that I have followed you here; but I could not keep from seeing you any longer, for I love you so very much, knowing that we are all the world to each other. I am staying at a boarding house in the village. It would not do for you to come to see me here, for reasons which I will explain to you when we meet. There is a road running past the house, and at the end of it is a running brook. Will you meet me there, Denis, at four o'clock Wednesday afternoon? I will be there, waiting for you. With much love and kisses,

"Your own fond

"NORAH."

"Now, do you believe it?" cried Fairfax, triumphantly.

Her lips parted.

"Perhaps you would like to see further proof of this. If you would, we could pass the spot together at the time indicated, and you could see for yourself whether he keeps the appointment or not."

"Yes, I will go with you," said Pauline, huskily, "and see for myself if what you say is true."

"I only know what this note tells me," he answered, plausibly.

Pauline knew that Mrs. Peters would not hear of her leaving the house in her weak state, but she hurriedly determined to go without letting her know. She could accept only the evidence of her own eyes.

"I will be ready to go with you in—in a few moments' time."

All weakness seemed for the time being to have left her. Hurrying to her room, she quickly secured a long dark cloak belonging to her maid, donned a thick veil, and soon reappeared in the library, where Maurice Fairfax awaited her.

"The carriage will be at the door in a moment," he said.

They had not long to wait. In a very short space of time the prancing horses were standing before the door. Fairfax assisted his companion into the brougham in silence, and in silence they drove on to the village and their place of destination, fully a mile beyond.

Fairfax looked at his watch. It wanted a quarter to four, and the hour mentioned in the note was four o'clock precisely.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAURICE FAIRFAX held the open watch towards her.

"We are early on the scene," he remarked. But she did not seem to hear him. "We can alight here and send the carriage on, if you wish," he said; "then we shall have a better chance for observing what transpires, and perhaps hearing all that may be said."

"No, no!" said Pauline, drawing back. "That would be dishonourable. I simply want to know if he meets this person who seems to have the right to appoint a rendezvous with him."

Fairfax turned the carriage into a by-road. The trees were so dense that they screened them, and here they awaited results in silence.

The moments seemed like years to Pauline. Five, ten minutes passed. She breathed freely.

"He is not coming," was the thought that passed quickly through her mind. But at almost the same moment, while looking through the trees, she beheld a slim, girlish figure approaching.

Pauline leaned forward in breathless intensity.

The girl was as beautiful as a dream. She saw a round face, a pair of dark, laughing eyes, and a wealth of glossy curls that fell to the girl's waist in luxuriant profusion, despite the crimson ribbon which endeavoured to control it.

In gazing at the wondrous loveliness of her bewitching face, one might well lose sight of the plainness of the girl's clothes.

She paused underneath an old oak-tree and looked anxiously down the road. Pauline caught her breath.

In a few moments the vigilance of the girl was rewarded.

A figure came in sight down the long row of maples. Pauline's heart turned faint at the sight of the figure she knew but too well.

"Mr. Connor is keeping the appointment, you see," said her companion.

Pauline shrank back pale as a statue, but answered never a word, her eyes rivetted on the approaching figure.

Denis Connor came quickly forward. A cry of joy broke from the girl's lips, and the next moment the lovely young creature was folded in his arms.

A low moan of pain came from Pauline's lips—a moan that died away on the summer air.

Under the spreading boughs of the trees stood her lover, Denis Connor—the man she had chosen to love and marry—his handsome, refined face bent over the girl, who was talking earnestly to him.

She saw him kiss the girl's face, hold her hands in his, talk to her most lovingly, and with an expression of fondness on his face which she knew but too well.

"That is the girl whom he loves," said Maurice Fairfax. "But he would marry you for your wealth. You have been duped—deceived!"

"Men are indeed traitors!" cried Pauline.

"Let us drive home."

"Now will you give me my answer?" cried Fairfax.

"My answer is—I—will—marry—you!" sobbed Pauline, burying her face in her hands.

He took from his pocket the letter which he claimed to be the confession of her father, and tore it into a thousand pieces.

"The world will never know the terrible secret which that paper could have revealed," he said, softly.

She trembled like a leaf as he scattered the pieces to the four winds, and a great sigh of relief broke from her lips.

"She does not know how easy it would be for me to write another letter just like that from the copy I have at home," he thought, with a little laugh.

The light of the sun seemed to die out as Pauline rode homeward. Fairfax was too diplomatic to interrupt her thoughts. He knew, although she was making a great effort to appear calm, that underneath that calm exterior the girl's heart was breaking. Not a word was spoken by either of them until the carriage turned into the spacious grounds of Castle Royal.

"Pauline, you have given me the promise that makes me the happiest man in the world," said Fairfax. "I shall not take advantage of it by annoying you. From this time forward I shall stop at the hotel in the village. Send for me when you want me to talk over anything concerning our marriage, which must take place as soon as possible."

She opened her lips to speak, but no sound came from them, and she turned and walked swiftly up the steps of the broad porch and disappeared through the oaken door that led to the entrance hall, Fairfax watching her in grim silence.

"All is fair in love and war," he muttered. "Only fools give up so valuable a prize as an heiress who is young and pretty into the bargain. My luck is indeed due to my cleverness. Pauline is too proud to ever care to see Denis Connor

again after witnessing what she did to-day. I wonder who the girl is. Connor is too much of the saint to have a flame. She must be a relative. I should fancy she is a cousin, or something of that kind. There is certainly a strong resemblance between them, though he is fair and she is dark. Instead of finding that letter in the corridor, as I told Pauline, I saw it in the breast-pocket of his overcoat, and I extracted it at my leisure."

Meanwhile Denis Connor was talking most earnestly to the beautiful girl under the oak-tree. His surprise upon receiving the note can better be imagined than described.

Norah, the little sister whom he had left in a far-off Irish village with his old father and mother, here in this English town! He could not believe it.

However, he made all haste to the place indicated. Could anything have happened to his father or mother? No, that could not be. He had received a letter from them only that morning. Surely they would have told him if anything had been amiss.

When Denis approached Norah held out her hands to him with a joyful cry.

"Oh, Denis! dearest Denis, I am so dreadfully glad to see you!" she cried.

"Norah," he cried, in the utmost bewilderment, "how in the world do you happen to be here to-day—thousands of miles from home! I can scarcely realize it."

"Do not scold me, brother," cried the girl, eagerly. "Let me tell you how it came about. A wealthy old gentleman and lady were coming over to England to stay a few months for change of air, as the old lady is an invalid. The old gentleman advertised for a young girl as companion for his invalid wife. I answered the advertisement, and he engaged me. At first father and mother were loath to let me go, but I pleaded so hard with them that at last they consented, because you were here and I should see you. I thought that you wouldn't like to have the great people at Castle Royal know that you had a sister in so menial a position—a companion. That is the reason I did not go there and surprise you, but, instead, asked you to meet me at this place. You won't scold me, will you, Denis?"

"No," he replied, kissing the girl's upturned face. "It would be useless to scold you, now that you are here. But I only wish that you had let me know. I do not like secrecy."

"Tell me about your beautiful home, Denis," said his sister, and if you will lose your position, now that the great silver king is dead," she added, wistfully. "I hear in the village that Mr. Stanford had a daughter," she went on. "How strange that you never mentioned it in your letters."

She wondered at the radiant look that spread over his face and the happy laugh that broke from his lips.

Should he tell her about Pauline? For a moment he pondered over the question. Would she believe so wonderful a story—that he was to marry Mr. Stanford's only daughter? No. He would not say anything about it to her yet; he would break it to her gradually. Little Norah would not be able to bear such great joy.

"They say down in the village that the old silver king's daughter is a very beautiful young girl. Is that true, Denis?"

"Yes," he replied, enthusiastically; "she is the most beautiful girl the whole world holds."

"I am greatly surprised to hear you say that," replied Norah, thoughtfully, "you who never used to be interested in girls, scarcely knowing one from the other."

Again that happy laugh broke from his lips.

"One cannot help but see the beauty of one with whom one is brought into daily contact," he answered.

"Are you brought into daily contact with her, Denis?" asked the girl, wistfully, fearing for her brother's peace of mind.

"Yes," he answered, with a strange, far-away look in his eyes that puzzled his sister very much—"yes, I see her every day," he answered in a low voice.

"I am younger than you are, Denis," said

Norah, "but perhaps you wouldn't mind if I gave you a little advice."

"No," he answered, wondering what was coming; "say what you please, Norah."

"Rich girls have plenty of money to spend on clothes, and can make themselves look just as lovely as they please—so lovely, that many a poor young man who is thrown in contact with them falls desperately in love with them."

She saw her brother start. But there was no troubled look in the happy eyes that laughed down into her own; and Norah was greatly relieved.

"He has not fallen in love with the beautiful heiress," she mused. "I thought Denis would be too sensible for that," she said to herself; then aloud: "I am going to remind you of the moth and the flame," she went on.

"I know the story," he interrupted. "It is familiar enough to almost everyone—the moth was singed by the flame it loved."

"It came to its death by the flame it loved," corrected Norah.

Should he tell her that the flame which she feared so much had warmed him into new life?

No; not yet; he would keep it from her a little while, and break it gradually to her. He was taken so by surprise at Norah's presence, to learn that she was a companion, that he wanted a little time to think matters over.

How should he break the knowledge of Norah's presence to Pauline? The thought troubled him and brought the first cloud to his brow. Would it make any difference to his beautiful love?

Pauline was as proud as she was lovely. That he knew but too well.

(To be continued.)

UNDER A CLOUD.

(Continued from page 607.)

"Why, they must be worth a hundred pounds!" Mrs. Elton remarked, after another examination of the ring on her finger. "How did they come by them, I wonder? Well, Nancy!"

Nancy had put in an appearance again, looking very much disturbed.

"Please, ma'am, Mrs. Dowling says will you come to her. Mr. Dowling is in a fit."

"A what?"

"A fit, ma'am. Some letter has come, and he was took bad directly, and they don't know what to do."

Mother and son thought no more of their rings, but made haste into the next house, where they found Mrs. Dowling in a state of great excitement, and her daughters too frightened to be of any use.

"He has only fainted," Mrs. Elton said at once, as she went up to the prostrate man, who had been in weak health ever since his misfortune. "Indeed, I think it is nothing more. Don't look so frightened, dear Mrs. Dowling. He is getting better already. You have had no bad news, I hope."

"No, oh, no! It was the shock, the surprise. He read the letter, and just dropped as you see him. My poor husband, after all he has suffered. I am afraid to think of it, lest it should be some dreadful mistake."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Elton, puzzled. "Anything you may speak of! Mr. Dowling is recovering. Arthur, raise his head a little—that is it."

The stricken man was opening his eyes and staring about him in a bewildered fashion.

"Mary," he said, faintly, "Mary, dear, are you there?"

"Yes," she replied, bending over him. "You are better, Harry!"

"Oh, yes, it was foolish of me," he said. "I should have known it was a hoax. It was a cruel one, but we shall get over it, my girl, somehow."

"Is it a hoax, Harry?" Mrs. Dowling asked, with tears in her eyes. "You must read the letter again, dear. See here, Mr. Elton, this was

what made him faint. I cannot believe it, and yet—"

She stopped, for her voice was full of tears, and she could not say any more; and handed a letter to Arthur, who read it with amazement almost too great for words.

It was an intimation from a well-known firm of lawyers in London that the whole of the money lost in the failure of Ridgways had been placed to his credit at one of the first banking houses in town, and they waited his instructions about it, and begged him to call at his earliest convenience.

"It is no hoax," Arthur said. "They would not lend themselves to such a thing. I heartily congratulate you, Mr. Dowling. I am glad to think there is such honesty in the world."

"I have sadly misjudged Ridgway," was the reply, in a saddened tone; "I must make amends somehow, but how can I do it?"

"We must find him," Arthur said, a wild, passionate longing possessing him to start and seek Maude Ridgway that instant taking possession of him; "he cannot hide himself after such a noble restitution as this."

He could and did. Mr. Dowling was not the only man who had been reconquered after his losses. The matter was freely commented upon in the newspapers, and the firm of lawyers through whom it was all done were interviewed and questioned, but all to no purpose. Maurice Ridgway might have been in the moon for all anyone could hear of his whereabouts. He was not in England nor likely to be, was all the information they would give.

Another year passed away, and it was known that everyone connected with the bank failure had been fully paid. But the name of the man who was making restitution was looked for in vain in papers and directories. If he was alive he had made no sign, and Maude Ridgway seemed as far off as ever from the man who knew nothing of her but her voice.

The Dowlings went back to their old place in the world, and felt as if they had suddenly inherited a fortune instead of having had their own restored to them, and Arthur and his mother wore their diamond rings with a pleased pride in them, that was pointed with the pain of hope deferred, whenever Arthur murmured the name that had become so dear to him, and sighed to think that he might never meet the giver on this side of the great unknown.

CHAPTER VII.

"You must think it over, mamma dear; there is no hurry."

"I don't feel as if I could think, Arthur. It has taken my breath away."

And Mrs. Elton looked almost piteously at her son, scared at the magnitude of the thing he had proposed to her.

"Then don't think, sleep on it, as Nancy says. It will all come right, never fear."

The loving arm went round her as her son spoke, and the lips that had always been near to comfort and advise her touched her forehead with a sympathetic caress, and she felt cheered and supported by the manly presence that was her aid and shield always, and smiled back at him with tearful eyes.

"Yes, dear," she said, "that will be best; things often come straight in the night very often. I shall get my breath and my wits back in the quiet and the dark; don't think me unwilling, Arthur, or unmindful of my good fortune in having such a son; but this is such a happy home, dear, and—"

The tears would have way now, and he let her weep out her agitation with his arm round her and his lovely face looking down upon her, and waited for her restored calmness before he spoke to her again.

The world was going very well with Arthur Elton; another year had gone by and he was prospering exceedingly, though he had never thought of changing the little cottage at Enderleigh for a larger or more pretentious house.

He had come home to his mother this sunny

summer evening, with a proposal that had nearly taken her breath away, nothing less than that they should betake themselves across the Atlantic and make America their home for at least some years. He had had the refusal of something very like a partnership with the firm he had served so long, and it was open to him to go to St. Louis and establish himself there as the head of a business scarcely less in extent and importance than the one in England.

It was only the thought of his mother that deterred him from closing at once with the offer without even going home to consider it. He had given up all thought of what she and Nancy called "settling;" the image of Maude Ridgeway was ever present with him still, though she and her father might have sunk into the earth, or flown away into the air, for anything that was ever heard of them.

Maurice Ridgeway was free of debt; his memory, if he were dead, was stainless; he had honourably paid up all his liabilities, and they had not been so heavy as was at first feared; commercial matters, that have nothing to do with our story, had taken a sudden turn before his affairs were settled, and much that was thought lost had been recovered.

The firm of lawyers to whom he had entrusted the settlement of his debts had been masterly in their total concealment of his whereabouts and they were gone now.

Both the partners were dead, and the business had passed into other hands. Arthur Elton paid them more than one visit, only to come away disappointed each time, and at last to learn that the present firm knew positively nothing.

It was on the day of the last visit, when he had turned away sad at heart, feeling as if every link between him and Maude Ridgeway were broken, that his employers made him the offer to go across the Atlantic, and he had joyfully, in his own mind, accepted it.

"Don't do anything rashly," they said to him. "We will keep it open for a week or so if you like; such a change requires consideration."

"Only for my mother's sake," he replied, and went home to consult her.

"Of course I will go, dear," she said to him the next morning, for she positively forbade him to say another word about it till she had thought it out to herself in the night. "I was only surprised and taken back," as Nancy says, at the suddenness of the thing.

"Are you sure of yourself, mamma, dear?" the young man asked; "it is no slight matter to leave England."

"England is not you, my darling," she said, fondly, "whither thou goest I will go." And she laid her head on her son's shoulder and sealed her promise with a kiss. "Now tell me all about it, and what we shall have to do."

What is there not to do in the uprooting of a home? Mrs. Elton's heart well-nigh failed her many a time in the few weeks that intervened between Arthur's resolution and their departure.

Change is pleasant to the young; fresh woods and pastures new are agreeable in anticipation. But to those with whom the heyday of life is past—who are beginning to feel how long the way has been, and how rough and steep the roads that looked so easy have proved—the idea of going from a comfortable home to an unknown resting place, is full of fears.

She hid them, every one. She said never a word that would betray her; and worked away with Nancy as if her whole soul were in the business, every fresh phase of which gave her a fresh stab.

Nancy had been rather a stumbling block, they were doubtful what they should do with her. She had been with them so long and had shared all their troubles and their prosperity, and to part with her would be one of the saddest items in much that was sad.

"I don't know what to say to her about it," Arthur said, the day after the scheme was finally settled upon. "Nothing will induce her to go across the sea; and, indeed, what we should do with her in America is more than I can tell."

"The missus isn't going without me, Mr. Arthur, don't you think it?" And Nancy, who had been

about somewhere and had overheard more than was meant for her ears, stood forth indignant and confronted them. "Not go across the sea, indeed! What's to hinder me if the missus can go? I'd ride to the moon on a fiery dragon if it was to do her any good. If you go to America or any of them savage places you don't go without Nancy. Why, what would become of you I should like to know!"

"Nancy, you have been listening," Arthur Elton said, with all the gravity he could preserve; the thought of Nancy's lunar journey had almost been too much for him. "I was talking to my mother."

"I know that, and I wasn't listening. I was looking after the slugs, and I did hear what you said; and I listened to the rest—it was about me."

The subject once broached it had to be settled; and it was arranged for Nancy to go with them. Arthur need have had no fears about her usefulness. The somewhat surly and dictatorial old servant turned out a helpmate indeed, and, strange to say, suffered nothing during the voyage, when Mrs. Elton was so ill as to occasion her son considerable alarm. Once arrived at their destination she set about making things comfortable and homelike at once, and, though waging spirited warfare with the American "help," tolerably contented and amenable.

Mrs. Elton liked the change after awhile. It was a wrench at first to leave all her old associations in England. But the climate suited her, and her home was far more luxurious than Clematis Cottage had ever been; and she could have as many flowers as she liked, and birds, and all sorts of pretty things—and, above all, pleasant companionship. They had come out furnished with plenty of letters of introduction to the best people in the place, and found their lot an enviable one in all respects.

The English lady found herself sought after and made much of, for the sake of her handsome son, at whom half the belles of St. Louis were presently setting their caps, with very little result. Mrs. Elton now and then remarked on the fact, but Arthur only shook his head and smiled, answering her looks and words by the stave of a favourite song of hers.

"Though this was fair and that was haw,
And you the best of all the town;
I sighed and said, among them all
There is no Mary Morrison."

"That's it, mamma dear; Mary Morrison is not here, and they may be all the most charming girls in the world; they have no charms for me."

"Will you never be cured, my boy?"

She had heard the whole history of his hopeless love—now that he felt it was hopeless—and she sympathised with him, motherlike, though she did wish he would marry somebody, even though he shut her out of the very first place in his heart by so doing.

"Never, mother; there is no cure as far as any other woman is concerned. I would marry if it was expedient—if there was anything to be attained. And I would, Heaven helping me, make the woman I asked to be my wife a good and faithful husband, and never give her cause to regret that she had taken me. But my heart will never have that vacant place in it filled. We won't talk about it old lady. What about the entertainment we are asked to for next week—shall you go?"

"Mrs. Debenham called to-day, dear, and she said she thought we had better do so unless we had some very important reason for staying away. These Blatchfords seem to be the great people of the place, and they have only just come back after a spell in the country."

"A spell! You Yankeeified little woman, you are learning the jargon of this go-a-head land very fast."

"I hope not, dear; it was what Mrs. Debenham said, that is all."

"I wonder what association I have with the name of Blatchford," Arthur said remaining, looking at a card of invitation that had arrived for his mother and himself. "I fancy I have some remembrance of it, and yet we didn't know any Blatchfords at home, did we?"

"I didn't, I know that much," Mrs. Elton said. "I must have a new dress for this affair—it is to be very grand."

"You shall be the best dressed lady there, according to your years and quality," her son said, and he beset himself and hunted up a cunning modiste, who turned Mrs. Elton out as dainty-looking a gentlewoman as ever graced a court. Nothing but black and white, she would have no colours, but her dress was of the softest and most lustrous silk, and her lace was plentiful and priceless. A few diamonds glittered here and there, where ornaments were not out of place, and the ring that she had received from "Allos Smith," shone upon her finger.

Arthur might well be proud of his mother as he gave her his arm to enter the house, which was like a fairy palace, in its beauty and luxurious arrangement.

Crowds of fashionably attired folks were pressing forward to make their bows to the giver of the feast, who waited with a lady on his arm at the end of a long suite of rooms, to welcome his guests.

Mrs. Elton and her son were not very sure what relation the lady was to the head of the house; the card they had received had got accidentally blurred a little, and whether it was Mrs. or Miss Blatchford they did not know.

"It is like a bit out of the 'Arabian Nights,'" Arthur Elton said, in a low tone, as he led his mother forward, their names called at the door as they proceeded by servants in quiet liveliness.

The host, a singularly handsome man with perfectly white hair, but no other appearance of age about him, started as he heard them, and the lady on his arm clung to it with a sudden grip that told of inward agitation.

"Oh!" she gasped, half to herself, "where are they?"

She was eminently lovely, "the Colorado Queen," as she had come to be called. It was there her father had, in the course of some two years or thereabouts, risen from a struggling speculator to be the richest man the country had ever seen.

He had bought a bit of land, barren and worthless as everyone thought, and had found a mine of wealth under its unpromising surface. He could not count his riches; and his daughter—for it was Miss Blatchford who leaned upon his arm, and did the honours of his house—would be the wealthiest heiress in the States.

She was tall and queenly-looking, dressed all in white, with priceless pearls here and there about her—twined in her dark hair, and shimmering about her dress. She looked the very embodiment of womanly purity and delicacy, and fashionably dressed women attired in flaunting colours looked at her, and wished they had left their gaudy plumage at home and donned less showy raiment.

Like a soft white dove amongst a flight of showy tropical birds she looked beside her guests, as she stood waiting for the newcomers whose names she had heard to come nearer.

They came at last, after what seemed an interminable time, and she put out both her hands and took those of the wondering Mrs. Elton.

"At last we meet!" she said, in a tremulous voice. "Don't you know me? I am the girl you saved and helped that awful night. I am so glad, so thankful you have come here to live!"

Arthur's hand was in that of the white-haired Mr. Blatchford; but his head was going round, and he was doubting the evidence of his senses. The voice was sounding in his ears once more, and the girl he had loved so long without any hope of ever seeing her again was his hostess of the evening.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Don't look so scared, Mr. Elton, please, or I shall be sorry I took you by surprise."

They were in the conservatory together, and she was leaning on his arm, looking into his face with her sweet, serious eyes, and watching his soul out of his body almost with the intoxication of her presence.

"They had made their public greeting, and he had stolen her, nothing loth, from the whirl of the dance and the concourse of admirers, and was snatching a brief moment in her company to assure himself that it was real, and no wild dream, such as had often come to him in the silence of the night and the loneliness of his darkened chamber.

"Was I looking scared? I hope not. You are nothing to be frightened at. It is the suddenness, I suppose, the strangeness when I think of Enderleigh and see you now. I feel as if I had rubbed Aladdin's lamp, and the train of slaves had come in with presents. This must be the enchanted cavern."

She laughed merrily at his words, and looked in his face again with her witching eyes.

"Do you know that is what the people here call our house?" she said, "and it seems just a little bit like it to me. I am so glad to see that on your finger." She touched the ring as she spoke, for he had taken off his glove that she might see it. "It made my heart give a great leap as I recognised it. What trouble papa took over choosing it, to be sure! He wanted you to have a good stone."

The trouble had been her own, and somehow Arthur Elton divined that it was so, and the knowledge made his heart bound with a blissful joy that made him feel dizzy and faint. He pressed the hand that lay on his arm, and there was almost a sob in his voice as he spoke again.

"This is no time to seek for explanations, Miss Ridgeway."

"Hush!" she said, in a low tone, and with a little cloud coming over her speaking face, "papa and I have abjured that name for ever. It has too much of misery in the memory of it. We have cleared it from stains, you know that?"

"Yes, I know."

"And we are never going to use it again. We are Blatchfords. It was my father's mother's name. He is Maurice Blatchford Ridgeway, so it is only dropping a syllable, as it were."

He remembered now where he had seen the name of Blatchford. It had been given in the banker's affairs at the time of the failure.

"Forgive me," he said. "I did not know."

"No, of course not; how should you? Have you ever thought of us since that dreadful night? I have thought and talked of you so often."

"Ever thought of you? I have thought of little else," Arthur Elton said. "I was afraid you were dead till I received this."

He lifted the rug he wore to his lips as he spoke, and Maude laughed and called him deliciously romantic.

"I did not die," she said, gravely, after a moment's pause, "but it was a mercy I did not. You said I had taken cold—that was a mild way of putting it. Papa got me away from England insensible, I believe. I was ill for weeks, and when I did recover, it was to go through such poverty and misfortune for awhile as I hope you know nothing about."

"Thank Heaven, it did not last," he said, with a smile, looking down at her dainty dress and her gleaming pearls.

"No," she said; "papa and I went to Colorado—oh, such a funny country! The style of living was very primitive, but I will tell you all about it some day—and papa bought a bit of ground. A bit of the desert of Sahara it looked to me, but all this was underneath it. And you have heard all the rest of the story, I daresay; it has been talked about enough."

She glanced round as she spoke, with her eyes full of tears at all the splendour by which she was surrounded.

"The storm has passed away," she said, "but it has left papa as you see. When I came to myself on board of the great ship that was bringing us across I wondered for a minute or two who the white-haired man could be who was sitting by my side. Ah, papa, dear, are you looking for me?"

"Partly, my child, and partly showing Mrs. Elton Aladdin's cavern," Mr. Ridgeway said, with a smile. "You must come back to your guests, Maude. Mr. Elton will come again, and hear all that has befallen us when he comes again."

"May I?" the young man asked, with a great throb at his heart. He was not going to meet her again only to lose her. He was to be admitted to her presence, hear her sweet voice, and see her speaking face—perhaps. Bah! he was thinking ahead. Doubtless she was appropriated already.

"May you!" Mr. Ridgeway said, breaking in on his ecstatic thoughts. "Who has the right, if you have not? Everything here is ours through you. If it had not been for your aid on that terrible night we should not have been here. Come when you will, we shall only be too glad to see you."

There was blank dismay amongst Maude's band of admirers as she walked back into the reception-room with her hand on Arthur Elton's arm. They had sighed and waited in vain; and this stranger, with the distinguished manners and handsome face, was walking over the course in a self-satisfied sort of fashion that was very aggravating.

"You will come to-morrow and see Alice Smith, will you not?" some of them heard their hostess ask Mrs. Elton as she took leave of her. "She will always be at home to you."

The next day Arthur Elton stood with Maude under the shadow of the great palms in the conservatory, looking down into her sweet face, while he clasped her hands in his own.

"You will think I am mad when I say it," he said, "but it must be spoken. From the hour when I heard your voice at Blingen earth has held no other woman for me. To win your love has been the dream of my existence. It is madness, I know, but—"

"Utter madness," she said, with a tremble in her voice, "and infectious, I'm afraid."

"As how?"

He looked at her for a moment and read the reply in her speaking eyes, and with a low whisper of her name he clasped her in his arms and strained her to his breast.

"You thought of me then!" he said, "and I did not know."

"I used to think I was mad," Maude said, in a low, sweet tone. "I had seen you, though you did not know it, and every dream of mine, every waking thought, was mixed up with thoughts of you. Is it unwomanly of me, I wonder, to tell you the simple truth, now, after what you have said to me?"

"No, dear, it is like Heaven's music in my ears."

She was in his arms again when Mr. Ridgeway startled them by suddenly appearing at the conservatory door.

"So soon!" he said, with a smile. "You have lost no time, Mr. Elton."

"I had none to lose," was the quiet answer. "Think how long I have been waiting for this moment."

"I am to lose her then—to give up my daughter!"

"No. Say rather to gain a son."

It was said afterwards that he had in very deed gained a son and Mrs. Elton, a daughter by the marriage which disappointed and disgusted all the fortune-hunting youth of St. Louis. It was intended to be a very quiet affair, but heiresses like Maude Blatchford, as she was called there, cannot hide their lights under a bushel, and all the city combined to make the day one of festivity and rejoicing.

And when their honeymoon was over, and they were settled in the splendid home that had been provided for them, Maude showed her husband something she kept carefully hidden away in a box, of which she had the key. It was only a battered old bonnet, and a faded shawl, the ones his mother had lent her on that starless night when she had so nearly perished of cold and fright, and he had saved her.

"I have kept them ever since," she said, touching them reverently. "Papa says they have been a talisman to me. I think they have always taught me a lesson; whenever I have been puffed up by pride and the flattery of others one look at them has been enough to remind me that the heiress, the Colorado Queen, as they call me, was only 'Alice Smith' after all."

[THE END]

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FACETIE.

"Who is your family physician?" "We haven't any." "Don't any of you cycle?"

"Did Mrs. Highlife's travelling gown fit well?" "Yes; but it cost so much she had to give up her trip and stay at home."

JACK: "But you said she sang beautifully." Selma: "No, I didn't." "What did you say?" "I said that she was a beautiful singer."

"An allowance is something like a bicycle." "How so?" "A man can put his wife on it but he can't make her stay on it."

CHARLES LOVEDAY: "Um, ah, Er, er—er!—I he he—he—!" Jeweller (to his assistant): "Bring that tray of engagement rings here, Henry."

SMITH: "See Wagstaff over there laughing so heartily. Someone must have told him a funny story." Brown: "More likely Wagstaff told it himself."

MR. PODMORE: "College men seem very much inclined to take life easy." The Cheerful Idiot: "Yes; even when they graduate they do it by degrees."

"And did my predecessor not find a place in your hearts?" asked the new missionary. "Well, the next thing to it," answered the cannibal, guardedly.

MAGISTRATE: "The evidence shows that you threw a stone at the man." Mrs. McDuff: "An' it shows more than that, yer honour. It shows that I hit him."

LONDON VISITOR: "Have you heard of those horseless carriages up in London, Mr. Oates?" Farmer: "No; but I've heard of the cowless milk down there."

ANGRY MOTHER: "How dare you tell your father that he is stupid! Go at once and say that you are sorry." Little Willie: "I'm awfully sorry you're stupid, papa."

CALLER: "Is the editor in?" Office Boy: "No; he's sick." Caller: "I wonder if—er, he got the poem I sent him?" Office Boy: "I told yer he was sick, didn't I?"

PATIENT (mournfully): "My health is in a very low state, doctor." Doctor (cheerfully): "Never mind about that, my dear sir, so long as your pulse—beg pardon please—lan't in a low state."

MRS. POTTS: "I see your husband has bought a bicycle suit. I thought he was determined never to wear one." Mrs. Watts: "I got him to get one by telling him he was too old to wear anything of that kind."

MOTHER: "Willie, whatever have you been doing? Fighting again, I expect." Willie: "Yes, mother." Mother: "Well, look at your clothes. Do you want a new suit every time you fight?" Willie: "That's nothing, mother; you should see the other feller; his mother will want a new boy."

SCHOOLMASTER: "I have examined your boy on the results of his schooling, and I think I can say he has beyond question the germs of greatness in him." Father: "I am delighted to hear it, but what was there in the examination that particularly emphasised this conclusion?" Schoolmaster: "The illegibility of his handwriting."

A WOMAN once called upon the sexton of a church and inquired what it would cost to get married. The sexton replied: "Five shillings," on which the woman asked if that included all. He answered "Yes." Arrangements were made for a certain morning, and the woman appeared alone. When asked where the man was, she replied: "Aw thowt yo' fun all for the five shillin'."

THE other day at a public meeting a reverend gentleman in taking his seat upon the platform contrived to miss his chair and measured his length on the boards. Unfeeling spectators tittered a little at this, but the mirth was uncontrollable when shortly afterwards the presiding officer introduced the unfortunate gentleman as a speaker in the words: "The Rev. Mr. R.— will again take the floor."

"I MUST say," said the young woman, "that billiards is a very silly game." "But you've never tried it," expostulated the young man. "I'm sure I don't intend to try it. What excuse is there for it?" "Why, there's ever so much science—" "Oh, I've heard all about that. "But there isn't any costume that goes with it."

"THIS talk about the bicycle amounting to anything in the way of exercise," said the fat man with three chins, "is all rot." "You ain't been tryin' it, have you?" asked the lean man. "No? No. My eldest girl's got one, and it don't tire her half as much to ride the thing all day as it does to help her mother for half-an-hour in the house."

JOHNSTONE (vigorously): "Blankety, blank! That infernal Jew he has sold me this watch as eighteen-carat cases, and they are only thickly plated with gold." Tombstone: "You, as a musician, ought to be highly delighted at such a beautiful example of Mo's art—see, Mozart. Here, bring water, sal volatile, a hospital, anything, my friend has fainted." And well he might.

"THE fact that I was a good musician," said the lady, "was the means of saving my life during the flood in our town a few years ago." "How was that?" asked the young lady who sang. "When the water struck our house my husband got on the folding bed and floated down the stream until he was rescued." "And what did you do?" "Well, I accompanied him upon the piano."

PROPRIETOR: "I tell you, sir, this is the grandest site on the face of the earth. The elevation is simply incomparable. You can look as far as the eye can reach, and you will fail to see anything higher." Guest: "With one exception." Proprietor: "There is no exception, sir." Guest: "Beg pardon; but this bill you have just handed me proves that your charges are very much higher."

"I AM afraid that after being friends for so many years those two girls have quarrelled beyond reconciliation." "They have, beyond a doubt," replied Miss Cayenne. "I told one that I had just seen the other, and she didn't even ask me what she had on."

A WOMAN entered a police-court the other day, and, quite indignant at an expression used to her, addressed the magistrate thus: "Mrs. Snooks, my next-door neighbour, called me a thief; can't I make her prove it?" "Well," said the magistrate, after a moment's deliberation, "you can, but you had better not."

"WHAT, another cup of tea, Mr. Dumley?" exclaimed the landlady as he passed his cup for the third time. "I am delighted to see that you are enjoying your supper." "Yes," responded Dumley, "I was quite hungry to-night, and the tea tastes unusually good." "Not very complimentary to me," went on the landlady, with a sort of second-class genteel little laugh. "I generally make the tea myself, but to-night I was busy about something else, and the cook made it. I wonder what she could have put in it?" "Well," responded Dumley, as he stirred it gently with his spoon, "I should judge, from the taste, that she must have put some tea in it."

"JOHN," she said, thoughtfully, "to-morrow is the birthday of that little Jones's boy next door." "What of it?" he demanded. "Oh, nothing much," she replied; "only I happened to recall that Mr. Jones gave our Willie a drum on his birthday." "Well, do you think I feel under any obligations to him for that?" he asked, irritably. "If you do you are mistaken. If I owe him anything, it's a grudge." "Of course," she answered, sweetly. "That's why I thought that perhaps you might want to give the Jones's boy a big brass trumpet." "The most resourceful woman in the world!" he cried, delightedly. And the Jones's boy got the trumpet.

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SOCIETY.

It is not generally known that Her Majesty, besides speaking Hindustanee fluently, can write it with more than average correctness in the Persian character.

DURING their visit to Lord Rosebery at Dalmeny, the Duke and Duchess of York planted two trees in a portion of the grounds known as the Royal clump.

PRINCESS LOUISE MARCHIONNESS OF LORNE, who stayed at Marlbad as Lady Sundridge, did a considerable amount of drawing while there.

THE Dowager Empress of Russia will proceed from Copenhagen to Gaumden early this month on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland.

THE Queen is to reside at Balmoral until the second week in November, her Majesty being expected to return to Windsor Castle on Saturday, November 13th.

THE Duke and Duchess of Fife will return south from Deeside somewhat earlier than usual this year, in consequence of the Duchess being in delicate health.

THE Queen has commanded a performance at Windsor in November, by the Carl Rosa Opera Company, of Mr. Hamish McCann's new opera, "Diarmid," the libretto of which has been written by her son-in-law, the Marquis of Lorne.

DIRECTLY the Queen of Italy betakes herself to her favourite summer resort in the Alps, she begins making daring mountain ascents. She loves her time in the heart of the ice country, where the people wear marguerites in their buttonholes in honour of her name, and even wear the costume of the district.

AMONG the women of noble birth who are distinguished for their famous horsemanship is the Duchess of Hamilton. It is said that her Grace can mount any and every horse, even to a thoroughbred newly out of a racing stable, and that she is possessed of an absolutely perfect seat.

THE Queen will hold a Court at Balmoral early this month, when her Majesty is to receive, on the Throne, an address of congratulation from the Corporation of Edinburgh. The address will be presented by the Lord Provost (who will probably be knighted), and he is to be accompanied to Balmoral by a deputation from the Town Council. The civic party will be entertained at luncheon in the ballroom of the Castle before the audience.

THE little Russian Grand Duchess Tatiana is as lively and healthy as was her elder sister at the same age, and is regarded by the latter as an interesting curiosity and welcome arrival in the nursery. The Tsarina is an example to all young mothers in the admirable way in which she superintends every detail concerning her children's well-being; and those who know the ceaseless demand on her Majesty's time are astonished that she should be able to bear the extra fatigue she so willingly undergoes for their sake.

A MEMORIAL gift has been sent by the Swedes of America to King Oscar in honour of his Jubilee, which was celebrated on September 18th, that date being the twenty-fifth anniversary of His Majesty's reign. The memorial consists of an artistic silver group of allegorical design. The two female figures are Svan, representing Sweden, and Nora, representing Norway. With their right hands they hold aloft a golden crown. Svan rests her left hand on the Gotha lion's head, and Nora holds her left hand on a shield bearing the Norwegian coat-of-arms—a lion with a battle-axe. Around the waists of the maidens is tied a ribbon, on which are inscribed the figures 1814, signifying the year of the union of Sweden and Norway. The group rests on clouds, under which the globe is visible, and beside the globe is the American eagle. At the base are the flags of Sweden and Norway placed together, symbolising the Swedes in America.

STATISTICS.

OF the 136,000 persons in Johannesburg, 50,907 are Europeans.

It takes 72,000 tons of paper to make the postcards used in England each year.

THE greatest length of England and Scotland, north and south, is about 608 miles.

THERE is about twice as much beef as mutton consumed in Scotland and England each year.

THE screw of an Atlantic liner revolves something like 630,000 times between Liverpool and New York.

It has been estimated that an oak of average size, during the five months it is in leaf every year, sucks from the earth about 123 tons of water.

GEMS.

GENUINE simplicity of heart is a healing and cementing principle.

Let friendship creep gently to a height; if it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.

HAPPINESS is like a sunbeam, which the least shadow intercepts, while adversity is as often as rain of spring.

THE fear that our kind acts may be received with ingratitude should never deter us from performing such acts.

ALL great men are brave in initiative; but the courage which enables them to succeed where others dare not even attempt is never so potent as when it leads to entire self-forgetfulness.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRIED POTATOES.—Peel the potatoes, and cut into thin slices, parboil them and dry them well, place in the frying-basket, and plunge into the hot fat. When golden and crisp remove, drain on paper, sprinkle with salt, and serve.

COFFEE CAKE.—Two cups brown sugar, one cup butter, one cup strong coffee, one cup treacle, four cups flour, four eggs, one teaspoonful each of soda and grated nutmeg, two teaspoonfuls cinnamon, two of cloves, one pound of raisins, one pound of currants. Bake in loaf tin.

CHICKEN FRITTERS.—One cup flour, one teaspoonful baking powder, half a cup milk, two eggs. Beat the eggs thoroughly, add the milk, then pour on to the flour and baking powder sifted together. Beat thoroughly with a wooden spoon. Cut chicken or veal into thin slices and sprinkle with salt; dip them into the batter and fry in hot fat.

GRILLED LAMB.—Eccell the lamb half an hour, then take out, score. Sprinkle with a teaspoonful each of salt and mustard and a tablespoonful of pepper. Bruise over with beaten yolk of an egg and sprinkle well with breadcrumbs seasoned with parsley. Put in pan and place in oven until brown—about one hour. Baste often with stock in which it was boiled.

PRUNE JELLY.—One pound of prunes; one-half box of gelatine. Soak the prunes over night, and stew until tender in the water in which they have soaked. Remove the stones and sweeten to taste. Dissolve the gelatine in a little hot water, and add to the prunes while hot. Lastly, add the juice of a lemon and two tablespoonfuls of blanched almonds. Pour the jelly into moulds and set it on the ice to harden. Eat with cream.

CORN FLOUR CAKE.—Beat two ounces of butter to a cream, add three ounces of castor sugar, and mix it thoroughly. Break in two eggs and beat all again. Mix together two ounces of dried and sifted flour, the same quantity of corn flour, and a teaspoonful of baking powder. Stir these dry ingredients into the other, beat all together for five minutes. Flavour the mixture as desired. Grease a cake tin, put in the mixture, and bake immediately. When cooked stand the cake on a sieve on its side.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE bullet which killed Lord Nelson at Trafalgar is still preserved. It is mounted in a crystal locket, and reposes in a crimson bag with gold tassels.

THE oldest love-letter in the world is in the British Museum. It is a proposal of marriage for the hand of an Egyptian princess, and it was made thirty-five hundred years ago. It is in the form of an inscribed brick.

A CUSTOM that has existed for several centuries is still maintained in some towns on the lower Rhine. On Easter Monday the town crier or clerk calls all the young people together, and to the highest bidder sells the privilege of dancing with a chosen girl, and her only, during the entire year that follows. The fees flow into the public poor-box.

PHRENOLOGISTS say that the head changes in form according to the mode in which the faculties are exercised. Brows will recede or advance as much as an inch or two; heads will become wider or narrower to as great an extent; and cerebellums, or small back brains, will increase or diminish. This has been proved by taking casts of heads at intervals of ten, twenty, or thirty years. A great mind that descends at last into petty trifling exhibits the descent in an altered form of the forehead or crown.

AN electrical company engaged in the rectifying of alcohol and syrups by electricity has made some experiments in the purification of water, and has discovered that even the foulest water may be made usable. The process is by the free use of ozone, which, entering into the water, cleanses it of all impurities. It has long been known that water moved at a high rate of speed clears itself or is cleared of a large amount of objectionable material. This, with the addition of the ozone, probably makes the most thorough cleansing which can be made aside from distillation.

HISTORY tells us that the canal known as the Bahr Jossunt was constructed 4,000 years ago, and is yet fulfilling the purposes for which it was made. The canal runs almost parallel with the River Nile for about two hundred and fifty miles. It turns and curves, creeping through meadows and along the foot of hills, carefully preserving its level until it reaches a point where it turns westward, and running through a narrow pass, reaches a district which without it would be a desert incapable of cultivation and devoid of vegetable products which would sustain life. Of course, the statement that it was built by Joseph, the son of Jacob, may or may not be true, but that it is of untold importance to that region need not be stated. There are traditions that this canal was originally intended to supply a lake which was nearly five hundred miles in circumference, and that this lake was the source of fish supply of that region, and that the value of this product was at least two hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year.

VARIOUS instances are on record where metals, while not showing any appreciable wear, have literally fallen to pieces, and that without any assigned cause. On one occasion a steel rail, after twenty-two years' continuous service on the Great Northern Railway, in England, actually disintegrated under the wheels of a passing train. So complete was the breaking-up, that scientists thought it worthy of investigation, during which it was determined that the metal had become exhausted and had broken down, just as an overstrained animal might be expected to do. This has led to further inquiry, and scientists are satisfied that metals do become tired out. Fine cracks often appear in steel rails, and it has been supposed that they are caused by the continuous concussion of railway wheels. This, however, seems to be contradicted by the examination of newly-made rails, in which similar fine lines occur. The idea that metals become weary, while not altogether a new one, is to an extent a plausible one, and under the careful scrutiny of scientific societies will probably be satisfactorily explained and settled.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. L.—There is no such document.

ALV.—Not without the aid of a lawyer.

S. V.—Inquire at Inland Revenue Office.

LAL.—You must have the assistance of a lawyer.

AGOR.—Whit Monday falls next year on May 30th.

CURIOUS.—Blanc mange means literally white food.

HALPH.—You must ask some member of the society.

JAN.—No; they would merely take their father's share.

DAVE.—"li" in Welsh place names is pronounced as "thi."

IGNORANT.—The accent in "corollary" is on the first syllable.

J. K.—The notice must be a clear fortnight from rent day.

CONVARIANT READER.—He is responsible if neglect can be proved.

B. B.—The whole of the city of Birmingham is in Warwickshire.

A. B.—The secretary is authorized to act in the name of the society.

BLAINE.—The distance from Dover to Calais is about twenty-one miles.

BOB.—If the wife does not make a will, the husband takes the property.

M. F.—Apply to the owners as you would in any other sphere of employment.

DAISY.—"Best books" are matters of opinion. We cannot advise you on the subject.

TANNER.—A simple and harmless remedy for sunburn is to bathe the face in buttermilk.

WORKING MISTRESS.—The servant can only demand a month's wages instead of warning.

R. P.—Use quick drying paint; there is no other method of accelerating the process.

L. M.—When step children reach the age of sixteen, the step-parent is no longer responsible for them.

WATTY.—They occur in Pope's translation of the Odyssey, near the beginning of the twenty-fourth book.

DISSENTMENT.—There is only one way in all cases of the sort; keep on applying until you secure a suitable birth.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—To the best of our knowledge and experience, that which you suggest in your letter is not trifling.

QUERENT.—If the engagement was by the month, you are entitled to a month's notice or a month's salary in lieu of notice.

G. R.—She may use the name by which she has always been known, but it would be better to describe herself by both.

BERT.—Add a teaspoonful of curry powder and some pickles chopped up small, with a little vinegar, to half a pint of the white sauce.

E. G.—The mayor of a town can call out the military in case of a riot; but the military dare not act until the King's Act shall have been read.

LENN.—The best blood purifiers are pure air, outdoor exercise, fruit diet, and frequent baths, followed by friction of the skin with hands or coarse towel.

MARIE.—It would be better hats for you to wear black gloves, though if the costume was very decidedly black and white, white gloves would be all right.

OLD READER.—You can in your habitual signature drop one or more of your Christian names; but it might raise a difficulty in case of claiming property under a will.

HAL.—When the Prime Minister is a peer, as at present, he cannot speak in the House of Commons, not being a member of it, nor eligible for election to that House.

H. W.—It is stated that a pall of water containing a handful of hay, if placed in a room where a person has been smoking, will absorb all the odour of the tobacco.

FRANKLIN.—It depends upon the industry and aptitude of the student. A pretty good knowledge of the art can be acquired in six months, but only practice gives readiness.

B. K. K.—Such stains on leather are often removed by mixing a little of the liquid ammonia, to be got at the chemist's, with an equal proportion of water, and lightly sponging.

V. B.—There is nothing in the laying of a cornerstone for churches, which makes it compulsory for a member of either of the societies you mention to officiate at such a ceremony.

REMARKS.—We cannot take upon ourselves the responsibility of advising young ladies to marry without their parents' consent, even in cases where the parents are evidently at fault.

AMBITIOUS.—What your friends say about your making a fortune by "going on the stage" is sheer nonsense. Not one actor or actress in a thousand ever makes a fortune, or even a decent competence.

POURLED.—It is always best to pass things to right or left, but of course there are conditions that would change this rule; it depends on how large a table it is, and how many guests are seated at table.

R. S.—Rub the stain with soap, and scrape a lot of fine chalk on it; lay it on the grass, and as it dries sprinkle with water. Repeat this once or twice, and if it fails try chloride of lime; but that is rather apt to burn.

BARNOL.—There is no set form of speech for such occasions, the editor telling his love and desire in plain, homely words, that carry more weight, generally speaking, than if couched in the highest-sounding rhetorical flourishes.

EMULE.—The secret of making the sauce successfully is to "add the oil slowly. Take the yolk of two eggs and the juice of one lemon, whisk well together. Stir one way gently, and add enough oil to make the sauce the consistency of cream.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—They are not apprenticed like other professionals, nor educated on purpose. They pioneer for themselves, and chalk out their own course; and generally experience many privations, disappointments, and repulses ere they succeed.

UNKNOWN READER.—After young people are old enough to earn their own living, they should be given a little freedom of thought and action. Marriage is a serious and solemn business, and the immediate contracting parties take a great responsibility upon themselves.

GLANCE.—It is unquestionably a fact that it is far better for young people to begin housekeeping at once, if there are not the very best reasons against it. They accumulate a store of useful and ornamental articles, and by owning their own place and continually making improvements, gradually build up a valuable property.

SOMETHING EACH DAY.

Something each day—a smile,
It is not much to give.
And the little gifts of life
Make sweet the days we live.
The world has weary hearts
That we can bless and cheer,
And a smile for every day
Makes sunshine all the year.

Something each day—a word,
We cannot know its power;
It grows in fruitfulness
As grows the gentle flower.
What comfort it may bring
Where all is dark and drear!
For a kind word every day
Makes pleasant all the year.

Something each day—a thought,
Useful, good and true,
That aids another's need
While we our way pursue;
That seeks to lighten hearts,
That leads to pathways clear,
For a helpful thought each day
Makes happy all the year.

Something each day—a deed
Of kindness and of good,
To link in closer bond
All human brotherhood.
Oh, then the heavenly will
We all may do while here;
For a good deed every day
Makes blessed all the year.

KITT.—Wet the stain and sprinkle salt on it; then when that lies a few minutes pour boiling water through the stain. If this fails, wet the stain with hot water, and put a little chloride of lime on it; then pour boiling water through it. This may injure the colour, but that depends on the silk.

N. V.—Rashness is often the result of nervousness; but in many instances it arises from the fact of having mixed but little in company. In the latter case it can be mitigated, if not altogether thrown off, by going as much as possible into society, and endeavouring to take a due part in conversation.

MAGIE.—The best plan to follow with your wash-bowls is to rub in well while cold with dripping or other kitchen fat; fill up with water, throw in some salt soap and soda, bring to the boil, and thoroughly scrub the bowls, run off the water and dry; this should leave it free from all objectionable coating.

CHORIE.—Three tomatoes, half teaspoonful sugar, quarter teaspoonful salt, pepper, quarter teaspoonful made mustard, two tablespoonfuls cream, one yolk, one tablespoonful vinegar. Mix the sugar, salt, pepper, mustard with the cream, then beat in the yolk; add the tomatoes gradually; peel the tomatoes and slice them, place them in a dish, and pour the dressing over.

NORA.—Mix together two ounces of soft soap, two ounces honey, a gill of gin, and the white of an egg. Stir these ingredients together in a basin, stand in a pan of hot water till dissolved, then let cool. Clean the ribbons with this, using rather a harsh place of now fannel, rinse in cold, clear water, dry in soft cloth, and iron while still slightly damp. Some people clean ribbons by laying on them a paste made of soda ash and a very little cold water; the ribbons should be placed near the fire for half an hour, and then the powder, which will be dirty, brushed off.

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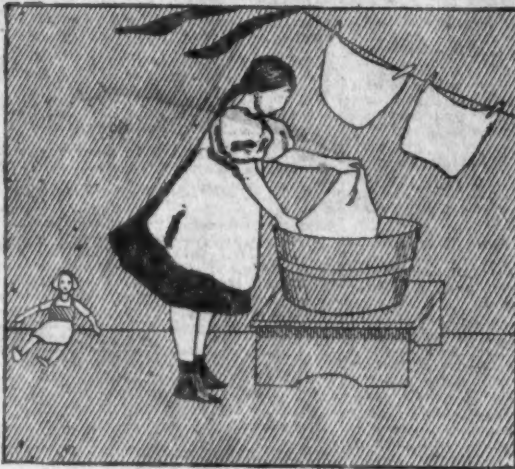
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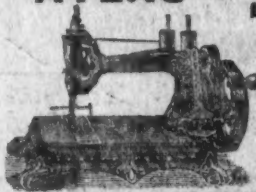
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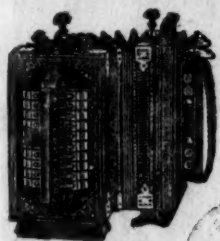
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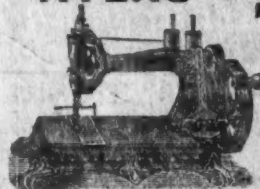
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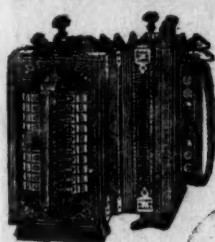
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